This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

280 f. 2775/2

Edward H. Whitgate
Easthampstead
June 1877.

Edward. H. Whinyate.
November 1855
Oxford.

POEMS.

POEMS.

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

THIRD EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1853.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA ·

CONTENTS.

	Page
THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE	1
THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY. FIRST PART	17
SECOND PART	21
THIRD PART	29
FOURTH PART	35
A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES	39
RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY	49
PRO-RHYME	49
RHYME	51
EPI-RHYME	76
THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST	80
BERTHA IN THE LANE	85
LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP	97
CONCLUSION	125
THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT	129
THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN	142

Page

A CHILD ASLEEP 150

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT 154

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN 160

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS 165

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS 174

AN ISLAND 182

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING 190

TO BETTINE 199

MAN AND NATURE 202

A SEA-SIDE WALK 204

THE SEA-MEW 206

FELICIA HEMANS 209

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION 212

CROWNED AND WEDDED 216

CROWNED AND BURIED 221

TO FLUSH, MY DOG 230

THE LOST BOWER 236

THE DESERTED GARDEN 256

MY DOVES 261

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN 265

SLEEPING AND WATCHING 270

A SONG AGAINST SINGING 273

WINE OF CYPRUS 276

[illegible]ODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS 284

Page

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE 292

THE POET AND THE BIRD. A FABLE 301

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN 303

A PORTRAIT 309

CONFESSIONS 312

LOVED ONCE 317

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS 320

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA 325

A FLOWER IN A LETTER 329

THE MASK 335

CALLS ON THE HEART 338

WISDOM UNAPPLIED 343

MEMORY AND HOPE 347

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY 350

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD 353

THE CLAIM 355

LIFE AND LOVE 357

INCLUSIONS 358

INSUFFICIENCY 359

SONG OF THE ROSE. FROM THE GREEK 360

A DEAD ROSE 361

THE EXILE'S RETURN 363

THE SLEEP 365

THE MEASURE 368

Page

COWPER'S GRAVE 370

SOUNDS 375

THE WEAKEST THING 381

THE PET-NAME 383

THE MOURNING MOTHER 387

A VALEDICTION 391

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE 394

THE LADY'S YES 396

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS 398

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS 400

A YEAR'S SPINNING 403

CHANGE UPON CHANGE 405

THAT DAY 407

A REED 409

THE DEAD PAN 410

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE 424

CATARINA TO CAMOENS 431

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE 438

POEMS.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

I.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer and told for beads
The dews of the eventide.

II.

'O young page,' said the knight,
'A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow.'

III.

'O brave knight,' said the page,
  'Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
  Of the bloody battle-game;
But here, below this greenwood bough,
  I cannot speak the same.

IV.

'Our troop is far behind,
  The woodland calm is new;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
  Tread deep the shadows through;
And in my mind, some blessing kind
  Is dropping with the dew.

V.

'The woodland calm is pure—
  I cannot choose but have
A thought, from these, o' the beechen-trees
  Which in our England wave,
And of the little finches fine
Which sang there while in Palestine
  The warrior-hilt we drave.

VI.

'Methinks, a moment gone,
  I heard my mother pray!
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for *me*

Wherein she passed away;
And I know the Heavens are leaning down
To hear what I shall say.'

VII.

The page spake calm and high,
As of no mean degree;
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
Full heart, his own was free;
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
Then answered smilingly:—

VIII.

'Sir Page, I pray your grace!
Certes, I meant not so
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,
With the crook of the battle-bow;
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
I ween, in any mood or place,
If the grasses die or grow.

IX.

'And this I meant to say,—
My lady's face shall shine
As ladies' faces use, to greet
My page from Palestine;
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,
She is no lady of mine.

X.

'And this I meant to fear,—
  Her bower may suit thee ill!
For, sooth, in that same field and tent
  Thy *talk* was somewhat still;
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear,
  Than thy tongue for my lady's will.'

XI.

Slowly and thankfully
  The young page bowed his head:
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
  Until he blushed instead,
And no lady in her bower pardiè,
  Could blush more sudden red—
'Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to me
  Is suited well,' he said.

XII.

Beati, beati, mortui!
From the convent on the sea,—
One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
And the lady Abbess dead before it,
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek

Her voice did charge and bless—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,
Chanting with a solemn breath
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the Dead than upon death!
Beati, beati, mortui!
Now the vision in the sound
Wheeleth on the wind around—
Now it sweepeth back, away—
The uplands will not let it stay
To dark the western sun.
Mortui!—away at last,—
Or ere the page's blush is past!
And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

XIII.

'A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I served thee!
Though thou art a knight and I am a page,
Now grant a boon to me—
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright
If little loved or loved aright
Be the face of thy ladye.'

XIV.

Gloomily looked the knight;—
'As a son thou hast served me:
And would to none I had granted boon
Except to only thee!

For haply then I should love aright,
For then I should know if dark or bright
  Were the face of my ladye.

XV.

'Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue
  To grudge that granted boon!
That heavy price from heart and life
  I paid in silence down:
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame: I swear by mine,
  That price was nobly won.

XVI.

'Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
  He was my father's friend;
And while I rode the lists at court
  And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
  He rose up to defend.

XVII.

'Oh, calm, below the marble grey
  My father's dust was strown!
Oh, meek, above the marble grey
  His image prayed alone!

The slanderer lied—the wretch was brave,—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
  Was changed from steel to stone.

XVIII.

'But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
  With a brave old hand to wear it,
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
  And against the knightly merit!
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon the traitor's corse
  Was yielded the true spirit.

XIX.

'I would mine hand had fought that fight
  And justified my father!
I would mine heart had caught that wound
  And slept beside him rather!
I think it were a better thing
Than murthered friend and marriage-ring
  Forced on my life together.

XX.

'Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
  His true wife shed no tear—

She lay upon her bed as mute
  As the earl did on his bier:
Till—'Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
  'And bring the avengèd's son anear!
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee,
For white of blee with waiting for me
  Is the corse in the next chambère.'

XXI.

'I came—I knelt beside her bed—
  Her calm was worse than strife—
'My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely when thou wert not here
  His own and eke my life.
A boon! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
  Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

XXII.

'I said, 'My steed neighs in the court,
  My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior's vow I am under now
  To free the pilgrim's shrine;
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest
  And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde
  While I am in Palestine.'

XXIII.

'In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
  Ye wis, I could not see,
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,
  And wedded fast were we.
Her mother smiled upon her bed
As at its side we knelt to wed,
  And the bride rose from her knee
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
  Or ever she kissed me.

XXIV.

'My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
  That the tears run down thy face?'—
'Alas, alas! mine own sistèr
  Was in thy lady's case!
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
  To the very battle-place.'

XXV.

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,—
  A careless laugh laughed he:
'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
  But not for my ladye!
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
  Unwomaned if she be.'

XXVI.

The page stopped weeping and smiled cold—
  'Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
  The mincing ladies wear;
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well, I dare to hold,
  By truth, or by despair.'

XXVII.

He smiled no more, he wept no more,
  But passionate he spake,—
'Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
  When none beside did wake!
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
  For one belovèd's sake!—
And her little hand defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood
  Most woman-pure did make!'

XXVIII.

—'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
  Thou tellest well her tale!
But for my lady, she shall pray
  I' the kirk of Nydesdale;
Not dread for me but love for me
  Shall make my lady pale;

No casque shall hide her woman's tear—
It shall have room to trickle clear
  Behind her woman's veil.'

XXIX.

—'But what if she mistook thy mind
  And followed thee to strife,
Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
  As Paynims ask for life?'
—'I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
  But little as my wife.

XXX.

'Look up—there is a small bright cloud
  Alone amid the skies!
So high, so pure, and so apart,
  A woman's honor lies.'
The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
  Betwixt it and his eyes:

XXXI.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
  From welkin unto hill—
Ha! who rides there?—the page is 'ware,
  Though the cry at his heart is still!

And the page seeth all and the knight seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
  And the Saracens ride at will.

XXXII.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
  'Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
  The narrow shadows hide!'
'Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
  And keep thou at my side.'

XXXIII.

'Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
  Thy faithful page precede!
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,
  The shoulder of my steed;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
  For one in bitter need.

XXXIV.

'Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
  Now ride, my master, ride!
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
  I shall be at thy side.'
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
  And adown the dell did ride.

XXXV.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
  No smile the word had won:
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
  I ween he had never gone:
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
  I ween he had turned anon:
For dread was the woe in the face so young,
And wild was the silent geste that flung
Casque, sword to earth—as the boy down-sprung,
  And stood—alone, alone.

XXXVI.

He clenched his hands as if to hold
  His soul's great agony—
'Have I renounced my womanhood,
  For wifehood unto *thee*,
And is this the last, last look of thine
  That ever I shall see?

XXXVII.

'Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have
  A lady to thy mind,
More woman proud and half as true
  As one thou leav'st behind!
And God me take with HIM to dwell—
For HIM I cannot love too well,
  As I have loved my kind.'

XXXVIII.

She looketh up, in earth's despair,
  The hopeful Heavens to seek:
That little cloud still floateth there,
  Whereof her Loved did speak.
How bright the little cloud appears!
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
  And the tears down either cheek.

XXXIX.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
  The Paynims round her coming!
The sound and sight have made her calm,—
  False page, but truthful woman!
She stands amid them all unmoved:
A heart once broken by the loved
  Is strong to meet the foeman.

XL.

'Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,
  From pouring wine-cups resting?'—
'I keep my master's noble name,
  For warring, not for feasting;
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
  Ye would not stay to question.'

XLI.

'Where is thy master, scornful page,
  That we may slay or bind him?'—
'Now search the lea and search the wood,
  And see if ye can find him!
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
  Before him than behind him.'

XLII.

'Give smoother answers, lying page,
  Or perish in the lying.'—
'I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
  'Twere better at replying.'
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
They cleft her golden ringlets through;
  The Loving is the Dying.

XLIII.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
  And met it from beneath
With smile more bright in victory
  Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lip serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
  The darks of life and death.

XLIV.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly!
As over wood and over lea
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
And the weary nuns with hearts that faintly
Beat along their voices saintly—
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud.
Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one*?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

FIRST PART.

'ONORA, Onora'—her mother is calling,
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden,
'Night cometh, Onora.'

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
To the limes at the end where the green arbour is—
'Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found her,
While forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her
Night cometh—Onora!'

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done
And the choristers sitting with faces aslant
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
'Onora, Onora!'

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
'Onora, art coming?'—What is it she seeth?
Nought, nought, but the grey border-stone that is wist
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
'My daughter!'—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,
She is 'ware of her little son playing below:
'Now where is Onora?'—He hung down his head
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
'At the tryst with her lover.'

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,
'As thou play'st at the ball, art thou playing with me?
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
And the saints know above that she loveth but one
And will ne'er wed another?'

Then the boy wept aloud. 'Twas a fair sight yet sad
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
He stamped with his foot, said—'The saints know I lied
Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide!
Must I utter it, mother?'

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
'Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
At nights in the ruin!

'The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof;
Where no singing-birds build, and the trees gaunt and grey
As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing?

'A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,—
And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell backward and swooned unto death
With an Ave half-spoken.

'I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground.
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat
In the pass of the Brocken.

'At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even!

'Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*,
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary
And a face turned from heaven?

'St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams, and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile—
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—'Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora!
The Tempted is sinning."

Onora, Onora! they heard her not coming—
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming!
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning.

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes;
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory,
Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word,
While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound
And floats through the chamber.

'Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,' said she,
'I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me.
And I know by the hills that the battle is done—
That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee.'

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss;
But the boy started up pale with tears passion wrought,—
'O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!
If he cometh, who told thee?'

'I know by the hills,' she resumed calm and clear,
'By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear.
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
As St. Agnes in sleeping.'

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek:
She bowed down to kiss him—Dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY—
That he shrank away weeping?

SECOND PART.

A bed.—ONORA *sleeping.* Angels, *but not near.*

First Angel.
Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair?
Second Angel.
As bodies be

First Angel.

And she so mild?

Second Angel.

As spirits when
They meeken, not to God but men.

First Angel.

And she so young,—that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing
That at her waking she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep.
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—
God's love—for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove
The world for this! not only her.
Let me approach to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before:
While, in a mother undefiled

Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word: is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!

THE PLACE IS FILLED. [Angels *vanish*.

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream! too near to Heaven it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream, sweet fiend!

Evil Spirit.

It is a *thought.*

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good—
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot, if it would.
I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me *dream* at least.

That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast.
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—
I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so.
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard stone,—
Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight! they move at nights alone:
And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,—
'Come forth my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields with me!'

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied! my word shall answer thine.
I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying,
I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in.—
What shall I do—tread down the dew, and pull the blossoms blowing?
Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowen?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where thou dost stand
Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in hand,
And clear and slow, repeat the vow—declare its cause and kind,
Which, not to break in sleep or wake, thou bearest on thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause:
I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the spirits laughed applause:
The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like a breeze,
While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out to me, why such a vow was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death and I shrank back afraid.
Have patience, O dead father mine! I did not fear to die;—
I wish I were a young dead child, and had thy company!
I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that smiled!

The linden-tree that covers thee might so have shadowed twain—
For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain.
Love feareth death. I was no child—I was betrothed that day;
I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel mine own betrothed go by—alas! no more mine own,—
Go leading by, in wedding pomp, some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were white in grave?
How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her!* that else he loveth none?
Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low he spake,
As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might take—
That *her's*, forsooth, are heavenly eyes—ah, me! while very dim
Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven!) would darken down to *him.*

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wert called to death?

Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee—

The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide thee,
And ever he flapped his heavy wing all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping beak.
I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay forlorn,
Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud, in ghastly fragments torn:
And through the night, and through the hush, and over the flapping wing,
We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the angels murmuring:—
We heard them say, 'Put day to day, and count the days to seven,
'And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of Heaven:
'And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,
'For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of *her*.'—

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me—speak bold and free.

Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,—
'I count upon my rosary brown the hours thou hast to stay!
'Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,
'Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of *thee*—

'And if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily
'Thy true love gazing on thy face, shall guess what angels be—
'Nor bride shall pass, save thee'. . . Alas!—my father's hand's acold—
The meadows seem—

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told!

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique beads,
By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds—
This rosary brown, which is thine own,—lost soul of buried nun,
Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike undone,—
I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow should break,
A pledge always of living days, 'twas hung around my neck—
I vowed to thee on rosary, (Dead father, look not so!),
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove—

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love! I felt him near again!
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain!

Was this no weal for me to feel?—is greater weal than
this?
Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels
heard but *his*.
Evil Spirit.
Well done, well done!
Onora in sleep.
Ay me! the sun . . . the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—
Ay me! how dread can look the Dead!—Aroint thee,
father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through
the night.
There is nought. The great willow, her lattice before,
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor;
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses and free
From the death-clasp close over—the BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the
chapelle,
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood rides that fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,—
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce
'And so endeth a wooing!'

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say:
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,—
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath,
When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,—
Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before
She seeth her little son stand at the door,—
Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander innocent-wild
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child!
He trembles not, weeps not—the passion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
On his head like a glory.

'O fair-featured maids, ye are many!' he cried,—
'But, in fairness and vileness, who matcheth the bride?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom,
For the courage and woe, can ye match with the groom,
As ye see them before ye?'

Out spake the bride's mother—'The vileness is thine,
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine!'
Out spake the bride's lover—'The vileness be mine,
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine,
And the charge be unprovèd.

'Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it aloud—
Let thy father and her's, hear it deep in his shroud!'—
—'O father, thou seest—for dead eyes can see—
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary*,
O my father belovèd!'

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths, by the old chapel-wall—
'So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother,' quoth he,
'She may wear an she listeth, a brown rosary,
Like a pure-hearted lady.'

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train:
Though he spake to the bride she replied not again:
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between them and her,
And calmly knelt down on the high-altar stair—
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view
That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue
As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
With a look taken up to each iris of stone
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

'In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for Heaven!
But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead—
O shrive her and wed not!'

In tears, the bride's mother,—'Sir priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company!'
In wrath, the bride's lover,—'The lie shall be clear!
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear—
Be the charge proved or said not!'

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place—
'Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary!*
Is it used for the praying?'

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled from smiles shut within:
Quoth the priest, 'Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessed she
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary
To a worldly arraying!'

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride,
And before the high altar they stood side by side:
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,
They have knelt down together to rise up as one—
Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,—
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the sound;
And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
Gazing cold at the priest without gesture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
He felt a power on him too strong for his will,
And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

'I have sinned,' quoth he, 'I have sinned, I wot'—
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought;
They dropped fast on the book, but he read on the same,—
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done
They who knelt down together, arise up as one:
Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,—
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,
No saint at her praying!

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide—
Then suddenly turning he kisseth the bride—
His lip stung her with cold: she glanced upwardly mute:
'Mine own wife,' he said, and fell stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head sinks away,
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and grey.
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor!
Let his bride gaze upon him!

Long and still was her gaze, while they chafed him there
And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her,
But when they stood up—only *they!* with a start
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart—
She has lived, and forgone him!

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
'Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own?
Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm
To the world's cold without thee! Come, keep me from harm
In a calm of thy teaching!'

She looked in his face earnest long, as in sooth
There were hope of an answer,—and then kissed his mouth,

And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
'Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!—
God, hear my beseeching!'

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay;
She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day—
Wild she sprang to her feet,—'I surrender to *thee*
The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed rosary,—
I am ready for dying!'

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground
Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn
And moaned at the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk:
'I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk!
I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro—
Of the stedfast skies above, the running brooks below;—
All things are the same but I,—only I am dreary,
And, mother, of my dreariness behold me very weary

'Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring
And smiled to think I should smile more upon their gathering.

The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dearest mine,
And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes' shrine.'
—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in the spring,
And her and them all mournfully to Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and gently shook her head—
'The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,' she said:
'The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at heaven,—but *I* must turn away,—
Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except in Jesu's face.'

She spoke with passion after pause—'And were it wisely done,
If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth alone?
If we whose virtue is so weak, should have a will so strong,
And stand blind on the rocks, to choose the right path from the wrong.

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love and
Heaven,—
A single rose, for a rose-tree, which beareth seven times
seven?
A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the
breast,—
Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the
best!'
Then breaking into tears,—'Dear God,' she cried,
'and must we see
All blissful things depart from *us*, or ere we go to THEE?
We cannot guess thee in the wood, or hear thee in the
wind?
Our cedars must fall round us, ere we see the light
behind?
Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal to need thee on
that road,
But woe being come, the soul is dumb that crieth not
on 'God.'

Her mother could not speak for tears; she ever mused
thus—
'*The bees will find out other flowers*,—but what is left
for *us*?
But her young brother stayed his sobs and knelt beside
her knee,
—'Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word
for me?'

She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on
his cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers
bloomed no more—
The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour
before.
Both perished mute, for lack of root, earth's nourishment
to reach ;—
O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness
out of each !

A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.

I.

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight
  Stand near the river-sea,
Whose water sweepeth white around
  The shadow of the tree.
The moon and earth are face to face,
  And earth is slumbering deep;
The wave-voice seems the voice of dreams
  That wander through her sleep.
                The river floweth on.

II.

What bring they 'neath the midnight,
  Beside the river-sea?
They bring the human heart wherein
  No nightly calm can be,—
That droppeth never with the wind,
  Nor drieth with the dew:—
Oh, calm it God! *Thy* calm is broad
  To cover spirits, too.
                The river floweth on.

III.

The maidens lean them over
  The waters, side by side,
And shun each other's deepening eyes,
  And gaze adown the tide:
For each within a little boat
  A little lamp hath put,
And heaped for freight some lily's weight
  Or scarlet rose half shut.
    The river floweth on.

IV.

Of a shell of cocoa carven,
  Each little boat is made:
Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,
  And carries a hope unsaid.
And when the boat hath carried the lamp
  Unquenched, till out of sight,
The maidens are sure that love will endure,—
  But love will fail with light.
    The river floweth on.

V.

Why, all the stars are ready
  To symbolise the soul,
The stars untroubled by the wind,
  Unwearied as they roll;
And yet the soul by instinct sad

Reverts to symbols low—
To that small flame, whose very name
Breathed o'er it, shakes it so!
The river floweth on.

VI.

Six boats are on the river,
Seven maidens on the shore,
While still above them stedfastly
The stars shine evermore.
Go, little boats, go soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spark!—
The boats aright go safe and bright
Across the waters dark.
The river floweth on.

VII.

The maiden Luti watcheth
Where onwardly they float.
That look in her dilating eyes
Might seem to drive her boat;
Her eyes still mark the constant fire,
And kindling unawares
That hopeful while she lets a smile
Creep silent through her prayers.
The river floweth on.

VIII.

The smile—where hath it wandered?
She riseth from her knee,

She holds her dark, wet locks away—
  There is no light to see!
She cries a quick and bitter cry—
  'Nuleeni, launch me thine!
We must have light abroad to-night,
  For all the wreck of mine.'
                The river floweth on.

IX.

'I do remember watching
  Beside this river-bed,
When on my childish knee was laid
  My dying father's head.
I turned mine own, to keep the tears
  From falling on his face—
What doth it prove when Death and Love
  Choose out the self-same place?'
                The river floweth on.

X.

'They say the dead are joyful
  The death-change here receiving.
Who say—ah, me!—who dare to say
  Where joy comes to the living?
Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad—
  Light up the waters rather!
I weep no faithless lover where
  I wept a loving father.'
                The river floweth on.

XI.

'My heart foretold his falsehood
  Ere my little boat grew dim:
And though I closed mine eyes to dream
  That one last dream of *him*,
They shall not now be wet to see
  The shining vision go:
From earth's cold love I look above
  To the holy house of snow.' *
                The river floweth on.

XII.

'Come *thou*—thou never knewest
  A grief, that thou shouldst fear one!
Thou wearest still the happy look
  That shines beneath a dear one!
Thy humming-bird is in the sun,†
  Thy cuckoo in the grove,
And all the three broad worlds, for thee
  Are full of wandering love.'
                The river floweth on.

XIII.

'Why, maiden, dost thou loiter?
  What secret wouldst thou cover?

* The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmaleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

† Hamadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

That peepul cannot hide thy boat,
  And I can guess thy lover:
I heard thee sob his name in sleep . . .
  It was a name I knew—
Come, little maid, be not afraid—
  But let us prove him true!'
                The river floweth on.

XIV.

The little maiden cometh—
  She cometh shy and slow;
I ween she seeth through her lids,
  They drop adown so low:
Her tresses meet her small bare feet—
  She stands and speaketh nought,
Yet blusheth red, as if she said
  The name she only thought.
                The river floweth on.

XV.

She knelt beside the water,
  She lighted up the flame,
And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
  The fitful radiance came:—
'Go, little boat, go, soft and safe,
  And guard the symbol spark!'
Soft, safe, doth float the little boat
  Across the waters dark.
                The river floweth on.

XVI.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded ;
  The light they cannot reach :
She turneth with that sudden smile
  She learnt before her speech—
'I do not hear his voice ! the tears
  Have dimmed my light away !
But the symbol light will last to-night—
  The love will last for aye.'
                The river floweth on.

XVII.

Then Luti spake behind her—
  Out-spake she bitterly :
'By the symbol light that lasts to-night,
  Wilt vow a vow to me ? '—
Nuleeni gazeth up her face—
  Soft answer maketh she :
'By loves that last when lights are past,
  I vow that vow to thee ! '
                The river floweth on.

XVIII.

An earthly look had Luti
  Though her voice was deep as prayer—
'The rice is gathered from the plains
  To cast upon thine hair ; *

* The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

But when *he* comes, his marriage-band
  Around thy neck to throw,
Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,
And whisper,—*There is one betrays,*
  When Luti suffers woe.'
  The river floweth on.

XIX.

'And when in seasons after,
  Thy little bright-faced son
Shall lean against thy knee and ask
  What deeds his sire hath done,
Press deeper down thy mother-smile
  His glossy curls among—
View deep his pretty childish eyes,
And whisper,—*There is none denies,*
  When Luti speaks of wrong.'
  The river floweth on.

XX.

Nuleeni looked in wonder
  Yet softly answered she—
'By loves that last when lights are past,
  I vowed that vow to thee.
But why glads it thee that a bride-day be
  By a word of *woe* defiled?
That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-song
  From the ear of a sinless child?'—
'*Why;*' Luti said, and her laugh was dread,

And her eyes dilated wild—
'That the fair new love may her bridegroom prove,
And the father shame the child.'
The river floweth on.

XXI.

'Thou flowest still, O river,
Thou flowest 'neath the moon—
Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,*
Thy charmëd lute a tune!
He mixed his voice with thine—and *his*
Was all I heard around;
But now, beside his chosen bride,
I hear the river's sound.'
The river floweth on.

XXII.

'I gaze upon her beauty
Through the tresses that enwreathe it:
The light above thy wave, is hers—
My rest, alone beneath it.
Oh, give me back the dying look
My father gave thy water!
Give back!—and let a little love
O'erwatch his weary daughter!'
The river floweth on.

* The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

XXIII.

'Give back!' she hath departed—
  The word is wandering with her,
And the stricken maidens hear afar
  The step and cry together.
Frail symbols? None are frail enow
  For mortal joys to borrow!—
While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,
  She weepeth, dark with sorrow.
                The river floweth on.

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

I.

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,—
Toll slowly.
And the oldest ringer said, 'Ours is music for the Dead,
When the rebecks are all done.'

II.

Six abeles i' the church-yard grow on the northside in a row,
Toll slowly.
And the shadows of their tops, rock across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below.

III.

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste,—
Toll slowly.

And between the river flowing and the fair green trees
a growing,
Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow
grey:—
Toll slowly.
Through the rain of willow-branches, I could see the
low hill-ranges,
And the river on its way.

V.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled
solemnly,—
Toll slowly.
While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the
solemn noises,—
Yet death seemed more loud to me.

VI.

There, I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all
the time
Toll slowly.
And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life
and sin,
Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

I.

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged—
Toll slowly.
And three hundred years had stood mute adown each hoary wood,
Like a full heart having prayed.

II.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest.

III.

Down the sun dropt large and red, on the towers of Linteged,—
Toll slowly.
Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery light,
While the castle stood in shade.

IV.

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.

Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire
When the wind is on its track.

V.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,—
Toll slowly.
And the castle seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights had stood,
And to-night, anears its fall,

VI.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did come,—
Toll slowly.
One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in the doors,
'May good angels bless our home.'

VII.

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,—
Toll slowly.
Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the untired smile of youth
Did light outward its own sighs.

VIII.

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward, the Earl,
Toll slowly.
Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry gold,
To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

IX.

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood,
Toll slowly.
Unto both those Lords of Leigh, spake she out right sovranly,
'My will runneth as my blood.

X.

'And while this same blood makes red this same right hand's veins,' she said,—
Toll slowly.
'Tis my will as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged.'

XI.

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth,—
Toll slowly.
'Good my niece, that hand withal, looketh somewhat soft and small
For so large a will, in sooth.'

XII.

She, too, smiled by that same sign,—but her smile was cold and fine,—
Toll slowly.
'Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine!'

XIII.

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth,—
Toll slowly.
'He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death.'

XIV.

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might rise,—
Toll slowly.
'Thy hound's blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,' quoth she,
'And he moans not where he lies.

XV.

'But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward!'—
Toll slowly.

'By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl
and dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward.'

XVI.

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with
lofty tread.
Toll slowly.
Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the
priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

XVII.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode
amain:—
Toll slowly.
Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out
on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain.

XVIII.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm
pursued amain—
Toll slowly.
Steed on steed-track, dashing off—thickening, doubling,
hoof on hoof,
In the pauses of the rain.

XIX.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed of might,—
Toll slowly.
And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night.

XX.

Dost thou fear?' he said at last;—'Nay!' she answered him in haste,—
Toll slowly.
'Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind—
Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!'

XXI.

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and fetlocks spread,—
Toll slowly.
Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered—down the banks,
To the towers of Linteged.

XXII.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed about,—
Toll slowly.
In the courtyard rose the cry—'Live the Duchess and Sir Guy!'
But she never heard them shout.

XXIII.

On the steed she dropt her cheek, kissed his mane and kissed his neck,—
Toll slowly.
'I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady Leigh,'
Were the first words she did speak.

XXIV.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and to-day,—
Toll slowly.
When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle wall,
To recapture Duchess May.

XXV.

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.
And a fortnight's siege is done—and, except the Duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

XXVI.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so grey of blee,—
Toll slowly.
And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold white gnashing of his teeth
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

XXVII.

Cried aloud, 'So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess May!'—
Toll slowly.
'Look thy last upon that sun. If thou seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

XXVIII.

'Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no sound, save that moaning of the hound?'—
Toll slowly.
'Thou and I have parted troth,—yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

XXIX.

'Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past compare,'—
Toll slowly.
'Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair.

XXX.

'Peck on blindly, netted dove!—If a wife's name thee behove,'—
Toll slowly.
'Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid the sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

XXXI.

'O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back troth,'—
Toll slowly.
'He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
'I forbid you—I am loth!'

XXXII.

'I will wring thy fingers pale, in the gauntlet of my mail,'—
Toll slowly.
'"Little hand and muckle gold" close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did, to prevail.'

XXXIII.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

XXXIV.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—
Toll slowly.
'Tower is strong and will is free—thou canst boast, my Lord of Leigh,
But thou boastest little wit.'

XXXV.

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she blushed right womanly,—
Toll slowly.
She blushed half from her disdain—half, her beauty was so plain,
—'Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh!'

XXXVI.

Straight she called her maidens in—'Since ye gave me blame herein,'—
Toll slowly.
'That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

XXXVII.

'It is three months gone to-day, since I gave mine hand away:'—
Toll slowly.
'Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

XXXVIII.

'On your arms I loose mine hair;—comb it smooth and crown it fair,'—
Toll slowly.

'I would look in purple pall from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's there!'

XXXIX.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

XL.

With a spirit-laden weight, did he lean down passionate,—
Toll slowly.
They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter therewithal,
With no knocking at the gate.

XLI.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered—snapped upon the stone,—
Toll slowly.
'Sword,' he thought, with inward laugh, 'ill thou servest for a staff
When thy nobler use is done!

XLII.

'Sword, thy nobler use is done!—tower is lost, and shame begun!—
Toll slowly.
'If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

XLIII.

'If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,'—
Toll slowly.
'But if *I* die here alone,—then I die, who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

XLIV.

'Five true friends lie for my sake—in the moat and in the brake,'—
Toll slowly.
'Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the breast,
And not one of these will wake.

XLV.

'And no more of this shall be!—heart-blood weighs too heavily,'—
Toll slowly.
'And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

XLVI.

'Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted faith,'—

Toll slowly.

'Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when Ronald speaks,

Albeit never a word she saith—

XLVII.

'These shall never die for me—life-blood falls too heavily:'—

Toll slowly.

'And if *I* die here apart,—o'er my dead and silent heart

They shall pass out safe and free.

XLVIII.

'When the foe hath heard it said—'Death holds Guy of Linteged,'—

Toll slowly.

'That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessed, blessed thing

Shall the stone be at its head.

XLIX.

'Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my memory,'—

Toll slowly.

'Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed bride
Whose sole sin was love of me.

L.

'With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her and entreat,'—
Toll slowly.
'And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting head
While her tears drop over it.

LI.

'She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her woman's prayers,'—
Toll slowly.
'But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

LII.

'Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my belief,'—
Toll slowly.
'That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief.'

LIII.

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown
strange and dim,—
Toll slowly.
Till his true men in the place wished they stood there
face to face
With the foe instead of him.

LIV.

'One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to
do and dare!'—
Toll slowly.
'Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—swear me service
worth the cost!'
—Bold they stood around to swear.

LV.

'Each man clasp my hand and swear, by the deed we
failed in there,'—
Toll slowly.
'Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one
blow to-night!'—
Pale they stood around—to swear.

LVI.

'One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts
to do and dare!'—
Toll slowly.

'Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed
before you all,—
Guide him up the turret-stair.

LVII.

'Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this
height!'—
Toll slowly.
'Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me
strong and far,
He shall bear me far to-night.'

LVIII.

Then his men looked to and fro', when they heard him
speaking so,—
Toll slowly.
—'Las! the noble heart,' they thought,—he in sooth
is grief-distraught.
Would, we stood here with the foe!'

LIX.

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and
their reply,—
Toll slowly.
'Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here,
must ride fast,
As we wish our foes to fly.'

LX.

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness
he did wear,—
Toll slowly.
Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes
of the floors,
But they goad him up the stair.

LXI.

Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess
May repair,—
Toll slowly.
'Tell me now what is your need,' said the lady, 'of
this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair?'

LXII.

Calm she stood! unbodkined through, fell her dark
hair to her shoe,—
Toll slowly.
And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

LXIII.

'Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like
yesterday,'—
Toll slowly.
'One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord
grows wild of speech,—
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

LXIV.

'In the east tower, high'st of all,—loud he cries for steed from stall,'—
Toll slowly.
'He would ride as far,' quoth he, 'as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.'

LXV.

'And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof did fall.'—
Toll slowly.
'Wifely prayer meets deathly need! may the sweet Heavens hear thee plead
If he rides the castle-wall.'

LXVI.

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on the floor,—
Toll slowly.
And tear after tear you heard, fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

LXVII.

'Get thee in, thou soft ladye!—here, is never a place for thee!'—
Toll slowly.
'Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its moan
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.'

LXVIII.

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,
Toll slowly.
Like a statue thunderstruck, which though quivering seems to look
Right against the thunder-place.

LXIX.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone beside,—
Toll slowly.
'Go to, faithful friends, go to!—Judge no more what ladies do,—
No, nor how their lords may ride!'

LXX.

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss and stroke:—
Toll slowly.
Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up the stair
For the love of her sweet look.

LXXI.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,—
Toll slowly.
Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her treading,—
Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a
hoof did fall,—
Toll slowly.
Out they swept, a vision steady,—noble steed and lovely
lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

LXXIII.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up
silently,—
Toll slowly.
And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within
her eyes
Which he could not bear to see.

LXXIV.

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife,—and the sweet
saints bless thy life!'—
Toll slowly.
'In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed—
But no more of my noble wife.'

LXXV.

Quoth she, 'Meekly have I done all thy biddings under
sun:'—
Toll slowly.
'But by all my womanhood, which is proved so, true
and good,
I will never do this one.

LXXVI.

'Now by womanhood's degree, and by wifehood's verity,'—

Toll slowly.

'In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,

Thou hast also need of *me*.

LXXVII.

'By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè,'—

Toll slowly.

'If, this hour, on castle-wall, can be room for steed from stall,

Shall be also room for *me*.

LXXVIII.

'So the sweet saints with me be,' (did she utter solemnly),—

Toll slowly.

'If a man, this eventide, on this castle wall will ride,

He shall ride the same with *me*.'

LXXIX.

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter-well,—

Toll slowly.

'Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,

To hear chime a vesper-bell?'

LXXI.

She clang closer to his knee—'Ay, beneath the cypress-tree!'—

Toll slowly.

'Mock me not, for otherwhere than along the green-wood fair,

Have I ridden fast with thee!

LXXXI.

'Fast I rode with new-made vows, from my angry kinsman's house!'—

Toll slowly.

'What! and would you men should reck that I dared more for love's sake

As a bride than as a spouse?

LXXXII.

'What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,'—

Toll slowly.

'That a bride may keep your side while through castle-gate you ride,

Yet eschew the castle-wall?'

LXXXIII.

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her suing,—

Toll slowly.

With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in—

Shrieks of doing and undoing!

LXXXIV.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, but the small hands
closed again,—
Toll slowly.
Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed
along his track
With a frantic clasp and strain.

LXXXV.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window
and door,—
Toll slowly.
And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of
'kill!' and 'flee!'
Strike up clear amid the roar.

LXXXVI.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,—but they closed
and clung again,—
Toll slowly.
Wild she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon
the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain.

LXXXVII.

She clung wild and she clung mute,—with her shud-
dering lips half-shut,—
Toll slowly.

Her head fallen as half in swound,—hair and knee swept
on the ground,—
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery
coping-stone,—
Toll slowly.
Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement
behind
Whence a hundred feet went down.

LXXXIX.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank
bestrode,
Toll slowly.
'Friends, and brothers! save my wife!—Pardon, sweet,
in change for life,—
But I ride alone to God.'

XC.

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like a
flame,—
Toll slowly.
She upsprang, she rose upright,—in his selle she sate
in sight,
By her love she overcame.

XCI.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as one at rest,—
Toll slowly.
'Ring,' she cried, 'O vesper-bell, in the beechwood's old chapelle!
But the passing-bell rings best.'

XCII.

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy threw loose—in vain,—
Toll slowly.
For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge rears amain.

XCIII.

Now he hangs, the rocks between—and his nostrils curdle in,—
Toll slowly.
Now he shivers head and hoof—and the flakes of foam fall off;
And his face grows fierce and thin!

XCIV.

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go,—
Toll slowly.
And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
Of the headlong death below,——

XCV.

And, 'Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,' still she cried,
'i' the old chapelle!'—
Toll slowly.
Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung out to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell.

I.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the churchyard, while the chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run,—
Toll slowly.
And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its change,
Here, where all done lay undone.

III.

And beneath a willow tree, I a little grave did see,—
Toll slowly.

Where was graved,—HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD,
A THREE-YEAR CHILD,
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

IV.

Then, O Spirits—did I say—ye who rode so fast that day,—
Toll slowly.
Did star-wheels and angel-wings, with their holy winnowings,
Keep beside you all the way?

V.

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and heavy crash,
Toll slowly.
Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the field,—
Though your heart and brain were rash,—

VI.

Now, your will is all unwilled—now, your pulses are all stilled,—
Toll slowly.
Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the child,
Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now,—
Toll slowly.
And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups from your mould
Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in spring,—
Toll slowly.
Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything

IX.

In your patience ye are strong; cold and heat ye take not wrong:—
Toll slowly.
When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

X.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.
And I said in underbreath,—all our life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?

XL.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly.

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part.

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary.*

I.

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side, on the grass,
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
On her shining hair and face.

II.

She has thrown her bonnet by;
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow—
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

III.

Little Ellie sits alone,—
And the smile she softly uses,
Fills the silence like a speech,
While she thinks what shall be done,—
And the sweetest pleasure chooses
For her future within reach.

IV.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses . . . 'I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds!
He shall love me without guile;
And to *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.

V.

'And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath,—
And the lute he plays upon,
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

VI.

'And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind;
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

VII.

'But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face.
He will say, 'O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in,
And I kneel here for thy grace.'

VIII.

'Then, ay, then—he shall kneel low,—
With the red-roan steed anear him
Which shall seem to understand—
Till I answer, 'Rise and go!
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

IX.

'Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say—
Nathless, maiden-brave, 'Farewell,'
I will utter, and dissemble—
'Light to-morrow with to-day."

X.

'Then he will ride through the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong;
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

XI.

'Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain
And kneel down beside my feet—
'Lo! my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting!
What wilt thou exchange for it?'

XII.

'And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,—
And the second time, a glove:
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—'Pardon—
If he comes to take my love.'

XIII.

'Then the young foot-page will run—
Then my lover will ride faster
Till he kneeleth at my knee:
'I am a duke's eldest son!
Thousand serfs do call me master,—
But, O Love, I love but *thee!*'

XIV.

'He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his deeds:
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.'

XV.

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,—
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe—
And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the *two*.

XVI.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding by the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads—
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops:
Lo! the wild swan had deserted—
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

XVII.

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not! but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds!

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

I.

Put the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done!
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the noon
I am weary! I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

II.

Sister, help me to the bed
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet;
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat!
No one standeth in the street?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

III.

Lean thy face down! drop it in
  These two hands, that I may hold
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
  Stroking back the curls of gold.
  'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
  Larger eyes and redder mouth
  Than mine were in my first youth.

IV.

Thou art younger by seven years—
  Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
  Grow too heavy to upraise?
  I would wound thee by no touch
  Which thy shyness feels as such—
  Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

V.

Have I not been nigh a mother
  To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
Have we not loved one another
  Tenderly, from year to year,
  Since our dying mother mild
  Said with accents undefiled,
  'Child, be mother to this child!'?

VI.

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
  Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
  All the gifts required of me,—
  Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
  Love, that left me with a wound,
  Life itself, that turneth round!

VII.

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
  Thou art standing in the room,—
In a molten glory shrined,
  That rays off into the gloom!
  But thy smile is bright and bleak
  Like cold waves—I cannot speak,
  I sob in it, and grow weak.

VIII.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
  One hour longer from my soul—
For I still am thinking of
  Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!
  On my finger is a ring
  Which I still see glittering,
  When the night hides everything.

IX.

Little sister, thou art pale!
  Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
  And my thoughts grow calm again.
  Lean down closer—closer still!
  I have words thine ear to fill,—
  And would kiss thee at my will.

X.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
  Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
When we all went gathering
  Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
  Do not start so! think instead
  How the sunshine over head
  Seemed to trickle through the shade.

XI.

What a day it was, that day!
  Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away
  At the sight of the great sky;
  And the Silence, as it stood
  In the Glory's golden flood,
  Audibly did bud—and bud.

XII.

Through the winding hedgerows green,
  How we wandered, I and you,—
With the bowery tops shut in,
  And the gates that showed the view—
  How we talked there! thrushes soft
  Sang our pauses out—or oft
  Bleatings took them, from the croft.

XIII.

Till the pleasure grown too strong
  Left me muter evermore;
And, the winding road being long,
  I walked out of sight, before,
  And so, wrapt in musings fond,
  Issued (past the wayside pond)
  On the meadow-lands beyond.

XIV.

I sate down beneath the beech
  Which leans over to the lane,
And the far sound of your speech
  Did not promise any pain:
  And I blessed you full and free,
  With a smile stooped tenderly
  O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

XV.

But the sound grew into word
As the speakers drew more near—
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so—do not shake—
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

XVI.

Yes, and HE too! let him stand
In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
Could he help it, if my hand
He had claimed with hasty claim?
That was wrong perhaps—but then
Such things be—and will, again!
Women cannot judge for men.

XVII.

Had he seen thee, when he swore
He would love but me alone?
Thou wert absent,—sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee who art best
Past compare and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

XVIII.

Could we blame him with grave words,
Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,
Flying straightway to the light:
Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—
Up the street! Is none without?
How the poplar swings about!

XIX.

And that hour—beneath the beech,—
When I listened in a dream,
And he said in his deep speech,
That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain—

XX.

I fell flooded with a Dark,
In the silence of a swoon—
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night,—I saw the moon:
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

XXI.

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand—
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,—
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a 'Poor thing' negligence.

XXII.

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor:
And the flowers I bade you see,
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth for me.

XXIII.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!
It was best as it befell!
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me! Only, blood
Runs so faint in womanhood.

XXIV.

Then I always was too grave,—
  Liked the saddest ballads sung,—
With that look, besides, we have
  In our faces, who die young.
  I had died, Dear, all the same—
  Life's long, joyous, jostling game
  Is too loud for my meek shame.

XXV.

We are so unlike each other,
  Thou and I, that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
  But for mutual tenderness.
  Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
  And meant, verily, to hold
  Life's pure pleasures manifold.

XXVI.

I am pale as crocus grows
  Close beside a rose-tree's root!
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
  Treads the crocus underfoot—
  I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree—
  Thou, like merry summer-bee!
  Fit, that *I* be plucked for *thee*.

XXVII.

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns—
  I have lived my season out,
And now die of my own thorns
  Which I could not live without.
  Sweet, be merry! How the light
  Comes and goes! If it be night,
  Keep the candles in my sight.

XXVIII.

Are there footsteps at the door?
  Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
Some one might be waiting for
  Some last word that I might say.
  Nay? So best!—So angels would
  Stand off clear from deathly road,
  Not to cross the sight of God.

XXIX.

Colder grow my hands and feet—
  When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
  And the rosemary be spread,—
  That if any friend should come,
  (To see *thee*, sweet!) all the room
  May be lifted out of gloom.

XXX.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
  On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
  I can still see glittering.
  Let me wear it out of sight,
  In the grave,—where it will light
  All the Dark up, day and night.

XXXI.

On that grave, drop not a tear!
  Else, though fathom-deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear
  I shall feel it on my face.
  Rather smile there, blessed one,
  Thinking of me in the sun—
  Or forget me—smiling on!

XXXII.

Art thou near me? nearer? so!
  Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
  Sweetly as it used to rise,
  When I watched the morning-gray
  Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
  He was sure to come that day.

XXXIII.

So,—no more vain words be said!—
  The hosannas nearer roll—
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,
  I am death-strong in my soul.
  Mystic Dove alit on cross,
  Guide the poor bird of the snows
  Through the snow-wind above loss!

XXXIV.

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
  Love's divine self-abnegation,—
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
  And absorb the poor libation!
  Wind my thread of life up higher,
  Up, through angels' hands of fire!—
  I aspire while I expire!—

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend. PLACE—*A room in Wycombe Hall.* TIME—*Late in the evening.*

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit o'er you!
Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run at will.
I am humbled who was humble! Friend,—I bow my head before you!
You should lead me to my peasants,—but their faces are too still.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter,—she is proud and she is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by
the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten
and command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her
acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of
the land.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a
prouder presence;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her
disdain:
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English
peasants;
What was *I* that I should love her—save for competence
to pain?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her case-
ment,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of
other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my
abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in
wings!

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps
their door-ways;

She has blest their little children,—as a priest or queen were she!
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on *me*.

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the palace—
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine:
Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and the chalice:
Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my Geraldine!

Yet I could not choose but love her—I was born to poet-uses—
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses—
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,

I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies
that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of
the salt.

And they praised me in her presence;—'Will your
book appear this summer?'
Then returning to each other—'Yes, our plans are for
the moors.'
Then with whisper dropped behind me—'There he is!
the latest comer!
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she endures!

'Quite low-born! self-educated! somewhat gifted though
by nature,—
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very kind:
You may speak, he does not hear you; and besides, he
writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers, leave the natural
sting behind.'

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there
among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning
scorched my brow,
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-
rung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature
through.

I looked upward and beheld her! With a calm and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them all—
'Have you such superfluous honor, sir, that able to confer it
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe Hall?'

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word of her speaking,
But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as for shame,
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—'I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim.

'Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,'—
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, overflowed her mouth)
'But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

'I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—

Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked
the thrushes first—
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my
beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands, . . . for the human
world, at worst.'

Then, she smiled around right childly, then, she gazed
around right queenly,
And I bowed—I could not answer! Alternated light
and gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye
serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from
the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still
around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the
wind!
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's
arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad
and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the nume-
rous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with
gliding feet,

And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows, with elastic laughters sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their light out on the terrace,
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep,
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-corded speeches
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest,
Oft I sate apart, and gazing on the river through the beeches,

Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice
o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and
laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them
in the hills,
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left
beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels
and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded
—with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her
throat,
With the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by
her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air and doubting if to
float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand
held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and
the skies,—
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on
to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her
eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly: her lips have
serious sweetness,
And her front is calm—the dimple rarely ripples on the
cheek;
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in
discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she does not care to
speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the
garden,
And I walked among her noble friends and could not
keep behind;
Spake she unto all and unto me—'Behold, I am the
warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to
their mind.

'But within this swarded circle into which the lime-
walk brings us,
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in
reverent fear,
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain
sings us
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure
enough to hear.

'The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender
jet of water

Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint!
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping! (Lough the sculptor wrought her)
So asleep she is forgetting to say *Hush!*—a fancy quaint.

'Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers:
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek:
And the right hand,—with the symbol rose held slack within the fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak!

'That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it: it applies more high and low,—
Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honour by denying outward show.'

'Nay, your Silence,' said I, 'truly, holds her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken!
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
[illegible]esence of the social law as more ignoble men.

'Let the poets dream such dreaming! Madam, in these British islands,
'Tis the substance that wanes over, 'tis the symbol that exceeds:
Soon we shall have nought but symbol! and, for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's.

'Not so quickly!' she retorted,—'I confess, where'er you go you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honour clear;
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down with Silence here.'

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation;
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her lovers deemed her fair:
A fair woman flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air!—

With the trees round not so distant but you heard their vernal murmur

And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and
outward move;
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to
be warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light
above—

'Tis a picture for remembrance! and thus, morning
after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her
feet—
Why her greyhound followed also! dogs—we both were
dogs for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay
through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and
spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed
along,
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns
to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a
song.

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down
in the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast
before,

And the river running under, and across it from the rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our own;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle interflowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is folded down!—

Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,' which, if cut deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity!—

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my making—
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,—
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are speaking,
And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate through which you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,—
She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of woodland singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is divinest—
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune;
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when the notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so cadenced in the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul! a music without bars—
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always thought them—
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch,

Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought them
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she speaks lightly—
Has a grace in being gay, which even mournful souls approve,
For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so rightly
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather! upon all things—substance—shadow—
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in the corn—
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the meadow—
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear—
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of 'progress,' as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—The
Age culls simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory
of the stars.
We are gods by our own reck'ning,—and may well shut
up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of
our cars.

'For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-
admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—'O the wondrous,
wondrous age,'
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,—
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

'Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep
resources,
But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright
without bane?—
When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestical
white horses,
Are we greater than the first men who led black ones
by the mane?

'If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in
rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric
breath,

'Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-power comprising—
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death,

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her—loved her certes,
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands!
As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved the virtues,—
In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely!—thought no idiot Hope was raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that sate alone—
Out, alas! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand had many suitors—
But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus did the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness, that they cannot press their futures

On the present of her courtesy which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought serene—
For I had been reading Camöens—that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,—
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
Springs up freely from his clasping, and goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew longer—
Speakers using earnest language—'Lady Geraldine, you *would!*'
And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents stronger
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that matched his station—
Of a soul complete in lordship—might and right read on his brow;
Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes, of less expression
Than resistance,—coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows,—unelastic lips, which seem to taste possession,
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distrain.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by his order
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of art and letters too;
Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help the harkening.

In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on all sides darkening,
And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for wealth, position. . . .
For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—
And she interrupted gently—'Nay, my lord, the old tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is, should be won.'

'Ah, that white hand!' he said quickly,—and in his he either drew it
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—
'Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it,
And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to decide.'

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn—

'And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble,
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born.'

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang, full-statured in an hour.
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sublimes to power?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded,—waved a flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures; and I saw the skies grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can.

I was mad—inspired—say either! anguish worketh inspiration!
Was a man, or beast—perhaps so; for the tiger roars, when speared!
And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion—

Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and
never feared.

He had left her,—peradventure, when my footstep proved
my coming—
But for *her*—she half arose, then sate—grew scarlet
and grew pale:
Oh, she trembled!—'tis so always with a worldly man
or woman
In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do
but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-
brothers
Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face
upon her hands—
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her
and others!
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with
my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though
leaf-verdant,—
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple
and the gold,
All the 'landed stakes' and lordships—all, that spirits
pure and ardent
Are cast out of love and honor because chancing not to
hold.

'For myself I do not argue,' said I, 'though I love you, Madam,
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod—
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam,
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

'Yet, O God' (I said), 'O grave' (I said), 'O mother's heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-closing!
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled!

'Learn more reverence, Madam, not for rank or wealth —*that* needs no learning!
That comes quickly—quick as sin does! ay, and culminates to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within.

'What right have you, Madam, gazing in your palace mirror daily,

Getting so, by heart your beauty, which all others must
adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and nothing more?

'Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,—
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace;

'What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn, despise, . . . revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, forsooth,—
As mere Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them
In the hope of living,—dying,—near that sweetness of your mouth?

'Have you any answer, Madam? If my spirit were less earthy—
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string—

I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am worthy as a king.

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her,
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again,
Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your dishonor—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!'

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I need not write them fuller,
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of tears—
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! Why, a beast had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like a call,
Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said 'Bertram!' it was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even, with queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said,
'Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a full hearing—
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less, instead—'

I had borne it!—but that 'Bertram'—why it lies there on the paper
A mere word, without her accent,—and you cannot judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion! I seemed drowning in a vapour,—
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted with that inward flow of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of abstract truth,—
With a logic agonising through unseemly demonstration—
And with youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs of youth,—

With the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake wisely

I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake, indeed
was true—
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there
weighing nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as
I could do!—

With such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered
and occasioned,—
As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in
his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,
impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly
drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her! Do you blame me,
friend, for weakness?
'Twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her
like a stone!
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring
wheels of blackness—
When the light came I was lying in this chamber, and
alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the
sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond*
the gate—

She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I—'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,—
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone!
I shall leave her house at dawn—I would to-night, if I were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart with no last gazes,
No weak moanings—one word only, left in writing for her hands,—
Out of reach of all derision and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

Blame me not; I would not squander life in grief—I am abstemious;
I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may soar again.
There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a Phemius:
Into work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die *till then.*

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell the tears on every leaf:
Having ended he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a dream—a dream of mercies!
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still and pale!
'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses—
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

'Eyes,' he said, 'now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that did undo me?
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning torrid

O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life
undone?'

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air, the purple
curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless
pale brows,
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for
ever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's
slant repose.

Said he—'Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand
there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I cannot hope or
doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of
silent passion,
Curvéd like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows
out.'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,—
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding mea-
sured pace;
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one
offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—'Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath,
or stir of vesture;
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching—hush! no breathing! or my heart
must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of
Geraldine!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling—
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and
tenderly;
'Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far
above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one
as *I?*

Said he—'I would dream so ever, like the flowing of
that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea!
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full com-
pleteness,—
Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—
through this dream of THEE!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,—
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of
her cheeks;

Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
'Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks.'

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her—
And she whispered low in triumph—'It shall be as I have sworn!
Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble,—noble, certes;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born.'

THE

RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT.

I.

I STAND on the mark beside the shore
  Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
  And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark . .
  I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
  I see you come out proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as dew . .
  And round me and round me ye go!
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
  Who in your names works sin and woe.

III.

And thus I thought that I would come
  And kneel here where ye knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
  In undertone to the ocean's roar;
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
  Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

IV.

I am black, I am black;
  And yet God made me, they say.
But if He did so, smiling back
  He must have cast his work away
Under the feet of his white creatures,
With a look of scorn,—that the dusky features
  Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet He has made dark things
  To be glad and merry as light.
There's a little dark bird, sits and sings;
  There's a dark stream ripples out of sight;
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
  O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI.

But *we* who are dark, we are dark!
  Ah God, we have no stars!
About our souls in care and cark
  Our blackness shuts like prison-bars:
The poor souls crouch so far behind,
That never a comfort can they find
  By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII.

Indeed we live beneath the sky, . .
  That great smooth Hand of God stretched out
On all His children fatherly
  To save them from the dread and doubt
Which would be, if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
  Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
  They make us hot, they make us cold,
As if we were not black and lost:
  And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
Do fear and take us for very men!
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of the glen
  Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX.

I am black, I am black!—
  But, once, I laughed in girlish glee;
For one of my colour stood in the track
  Where the drivers drove, and looked at me—
And tender and full was the look he gave:
Could a slave look *so* at another slave?—
  I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
  As free as if unsold, unbought:
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
  To conquer the world, we thought!
The drivers drove us day by day;
We did not mind, we went one way
  And no better a freedom sought.

XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,
  He said "I love you" as he passed:
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
  I heard how he vowed it fast:
While others shook he smiled in the hut
As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut
  Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song;
  Over and over I sang his name—
Upward and downward I drew it along
  My various notes,—the same, the same!
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess from aught they could hear,
  It was only a name—a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea.
  We were two to love, and two to pray,—
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
  Though nothing didst Thou say.
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun!
And now I cry who am but one,
  How wilt Thou speak to-day?—

XIV.

We were black, we were black!
  We had no claim to love and bliss,
What marvel, if each went to wrack?
  They wrung my cold hands out of his,—
They dragged him . . . where? . . I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust! . . not much,
  Ye pilgrim-souls, . . though plain as *this!*

XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
  Mere grief's too good for such as I.
So the white men brought the shame ere long
  To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes!—it was too merciful
  To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI.

I am black, I am black!
  I wore a child upon my breast . . .
An amulet that hung too slack
  And, in my unrest, could not rest:
Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
One to another, one to another,
  Until all ended for the best.

XVII.

For hark! I will tell you low . . low . .
  I am black, you see,—
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
  Was far too white . . too white for me;
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
Beside me at church but yesterday,
  Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child! I could not bear
  To look in his face, it was so white.
I covered him up with a kerchief there;
  I covered his face in close and tight:
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
For the white child wanted his liberty—
  Ha, ha! he wanted the master-right.

XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
  His little feet that never grew—
He struck them out, as it was meet,
  Against my heart to break it through.
I might have sung and made him mild—
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
  The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close:
  He could not see the sun, I swear
More, then, alive, than now he does
  From between the roots of the mangles . . . where?
. . I know where. Close! a child and mother
Do wrong to look at one another,
  When one is black and one is fair.

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had
  Of my child's face, . . I tell you all,
I saw a look that made me mad . .
  The *master's* look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash . . or worse!—
And so, to save it from my curse,
  I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
  He shivered from head to foot;
Till, after a time, he lay instead
  Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt beside a stiffening cold . . .
I dared to lift up just a fold, . .
  As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII.

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha!—there, had been
  (I laugh to think on't at this hour! . .)
Your fine white angels who have seen
  Nearest the secret of God's power, . .
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of mine,
  As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white!
  They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but, day and night,
  I carried the body to and fro;
And it lay on my heart like a stone . . as chill.
—The sun may shine out as much as he will:
  I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,
  I carried the little body on.
The forest's arms did round us shut,
  And silence through the trees did run:
They asked no question as I went,—
They stood too high for astonishment,—
  They could see God sit on his throne.

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
  I bore it on through the forest . . on:
And when I felt it was tired at last,
  I scooped a hole beneath the moon.
Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every star,
  Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright, . .
  Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed, . .
All, changed to black earth, . . nothing white, . .
  A dark child in the dark,—ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew young:
I sate down smiling there and sung
  The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,
  The white child and black mother, thus:
For, as I sang it soft and wild
  The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate!
It was the dead child singing that,
  To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky!
  Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay
The free sun rideth gloriously,
  But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
Through the earliest streaks of the morn.
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
  Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ah!—in their 'stead, their hunter sons!
  Ah, ah! they are on me—they hunt in a ring—
Keep off! I brave you all at once—
  I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:
Did you never stand still in your triumph, and shrink
  From the stroke of her wounded wing?

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)
  I wish you who stand there five a-breast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
  A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangles!—Yes, but *she*
May keep live babies on her knee,
  And sing the song she likes the best.

XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black.
  I see you staring in my face—
I know you staring, shrinking back—
  Ye are born of the Washington-race:
And this land is the free America:
And this mark on my wrist . . (I prove what I say)
  Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!
  I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun.
I only cursed them all around
  As softly as I might have done
My very own child!—From these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
  O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV.

Whips, curses; these must answer those!
  For in this UNION, you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
  Each loathing each: and all forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,
While HE sees gaping everywhere
  Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white men
  Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
  Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed . . .
(Stand off!) *we* help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
  And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky:
  The clouds are breaking on my brain;
I am floated along, as if I should die
  Of liberty's exquisite pain—
In the name of the white child, waiting for me
In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
  In my broken heart's disdain!

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

"φεῦ, φεῦ, τί προσδερκεσθέ μ' ὀμμασιν, τέκνα."—MEDEA.

I.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years ?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,—
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly !—
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

II.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so ?—

The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago—
The old tree is leafless in the forest—
The old year is ending in the frost—
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest—
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

III.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy—
'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very dreary;'
'Our young feet,' they say, 'are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

IV.

'True,' say the children, 'it may happen
That we die before our time.
Little Alice died last year—the grave is shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her—
Was no room for any work in the close clay:
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries!—
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes!
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud, by the kirk-chime!
It is good when it happens,' say the children,
'That we die before our time.'

V.

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have!
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city—
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do—
Pluck you handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty—
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

VI.

'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap—
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping—
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground—
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

VII.

'For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—
Their wind comes in our faces,—
Till our hearts turn,—our head, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places—
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling—
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall—
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling—
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.—
And all day, the iron wheels are droning;
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'

VIII.

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth—
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals—
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!—
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

IX.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray—
So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, 'Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word;
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round him,
Hears our weeping any more?

X.

'Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.*
We know no other words, except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

XI.

'But, no!' say the children, weeping faster,
'He is speechless as a stone;
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!' say the children,—'Up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving—

* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations; and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however we may be open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.

We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.'
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving—
And the children doubt of each.

XII.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun:
They know the grief of man, without his wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm—
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,—
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,—
Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The blessing of its memory cannot keep,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly:
Let them weep! let them weep!

XIII.

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in their places,
With eyes turned on Deity;—
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—

Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
  And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
    And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob curses deeper in the silence
    Than the strong man in his wrath!'

A CHILD ASLEEP.

I.

How he sleepeth! having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore!
From its pretty eyes have sunken
Pleasures to make room for more—
Sleeping near the wither'd nosegay which he pulled the day before.

II.

Nosegays! leave them for the waking:
Throw them earthward where they grew.
Dim are such, beside the breaking
Amaranths he looks unto—
Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

III.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
From the palms they sprang beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath—
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of his breath.

IV.

Vision unto vision calleth,
While the young child dreameth on.
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won!
Darker wert thou in the garden yestermorn by summer sun.

V.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee,—were the clouds away.
'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing!—Stars that seem the mutest, go in music all the way.

VI.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,—
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its repose.

VII.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,—
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee,—
While thou smilest . . not in sooth
Thy smile . . but the overfair one, dropt from some ætherial mouth.

VIII.

Haply it is angels' duty,
  During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
  To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall
  see it fade.

IX.

Softly, softly! make no noises!
  Now he lieth dead and dumb—
Now he hears the angels' voices
  Folding silence in the room—
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words
  as they come.

X.

Speak not! he is consecrated—
  Breathe no breath across his eyes.
Lifted up and separated
  On the hand of God he lies,
In a sweetness beyond touching,—held in cloistral
  sanctities.

XI.

Could ye bless him—father—mother?
  Bless the dimple in his cheek?
Dare ye look at one another,
  And the benediction speak?
Would ye not break out in weeping, and confess your-
  selves too weak?

XII.

He is harmless—ye are sinful,—
Ye are troubled—he, at ease:
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase!
Dare not bless him! but be blessed by his peace—and
go in peace.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

I.

When ye stood up in the house
  With your little childish feet,
And, in touching Life's first shows,
  First the touch of Love did meet,—
Love and Nearness seeming one,
  By the heartlight cast before,
And, of all Beloveds, none
  Standing farther than the door—
Not a name being dear to thought,
  With its owner beyond call,—
Nor a face, unless it brought
  Its own shadow to the wall,—
When the worst recorded change
  Was of apple dropt from bough,—
When love's sorrow seemed more strange
  Than love's treason can seem now,—
Then, the Loving took you up
  Soft, upon their elder knees,—
Telling why the statues droop

Underneath the churchyard trees,
And how ye must lie beneath them,
Through the winters long and deep,
Till the last trump overbreathe them,
And ye smile out of your sleep . . .
Oh ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
A tale of fairy ships
With a swan-wing for a sail!—
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
For the merry, merry tale!—
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead.

II.

Soon ye read in solemn stories
Of the men of long ago—
Of the pale bewildering glories
Shining farther than we know,—
Of the heroes with the laurel,
Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
For that beauteous Helena,—
How Achilles at the portal
Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh,
And his strong heart, half-immortal,
Met the *keitai* with a cry,—
How Ulysses left the sunlight
For the pale eidola race
Blank and passive through the dun light,
Staring blindly on his face.

How that true wife said to Pœtus,
With calm smile and wounded heart,—
'Sweet, it hurts not!'—how Admetus
Saw his blessed one depart.
How King Arthur proved his mission,—
And Sir Roland wound his horn,—
And at Sangreal's moony vision
Swords did bristle round like corn.
Oh! ye lifted up your head, and it seemed the while ye read,
That this death, then, must be found
A Valhalla for the crowned,
The heroic who prevail.
None, be sure can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale!—
So awfully ye thought upon the Dead.

III.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light,—
That wakes, starting up and bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him,
Stifling black about his head!—
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,

And ye heard the thunder hurtle
  From the silence of the cloud!
Funeral-torches at your gateway
  Threw a dreadful light within;
All things changed! you rose up straightway,
  And saluted Death and Sin.
Since,—your outward man has rallied,
  And your eye and voice grown bold—
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
  With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy;
  If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
  As at solemn sacrament:
Merry books, once read for pastime,
  If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
  Would swim darkly up the brain:
Household names, which used to flutter
  Through your laughter unawares,—
God's Divine name ye could utter
  With less trembling in your prayers!
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
  On your own hearts in the path
  Ye are called to in His wrath,—
  And your prayers go up in wail!
  —'Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
  O Thou agonised on cross?

Art thou reading all its tale?'
So mournfully ye think upon the Dead.

IV.

Pray, pray, thou who also weepest,
And the drops will slacken so;—
Weep, weep;—and the watch thou keepest,
With a quicker count will go.
Think:—the shadow on the dial
For the nature most undone,
Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun.
Look, look up, in starry passion,
To the throne above the spheres,—
Learn; the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's.
Hope, with all the strength thou usest
In embracing thy despair.
Love; the earthly love thou losest
Shall return to thee more fair.
Work; make clear the forest-tangles
Of the wildest stranger-land.
Trust: the blessed deathly angels
Whisper, 'Sabbath hours at hand!'
By the heart's wound when most gory,
By the longest agony,
Smile!—Behold, in sudden glory
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee!*

And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,
'My Beloved, is it so?
Have ye tasted of my woe?—
Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!'—
He stands brightly where the shade is,
With the keys of Death and Hades,
And there, ends the mournful tale.—
So hopefully ye think upon the Dead.

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,
With a somewhat paler brow
Than she giveth to the ocean?
He, without a pulse or motion,
Muttering low before her stands,
Lifting his invoking hands,
Like a seer before a sprite,
To catch her oracles of light.
But thy soul out-trembles now
Many pulses on thy brow!
Where be all thy laughters clear,
Others laughed, alone to hear?
Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame?
Where, thy dances, turned to game?
Where, thy festive companies,
Moonëd o'er with ladies' eyes,
All more bright for thee, I trow?
'Neath my moon, what doest thou?

THE MERRY MAN.

I AM digging my warm heart,
Till I find its coldest part:
I am digging wide and low,
Further than a spade will go,
Till that, when the pit is deep
And large enough, I there may heap
All my present pain and past
Joy, dead things that look aghast
By the daylight.—Now 'tis done!
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden
Treasures which my hands have holden,
Till the chillness made them ache;
Of childhood's hopes, that used to wake
If birds were in a singing strain,
And for less cause, sleep again;
Of the moss seat in the wood,
Where I trysted solitude;
Of the hill-top, where the wind
Used to follow me behind,
Then in sudden rush to blind
Both my glad eyes with my hair,
Taken gladly in the snare!

Of the climbing up the rocks,—
Of the playing 'neath the oaks,
Which retain beneath them now
Only shadow of the bough:
Of the lying on the grass
While the clouds did overpass,—
Only they, so lightly driven,
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven!
Of the little prayers serene,
Murmuring of earth and sin;
Of large-leaved philosophy
Leaning from my childish knee;
Of poetic book sublime,
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,—
Greek or English,—ere I knew
Life was not a poem too!
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Of the glorious ambitions,
Yet unquenched by their fruitions;
Of the reading out the nights;
Of the straining at mad heights;
Of achievements, less descried
By a dear few, than magnified;
Of praises, from the many earned,
When praise from love was undiscerned;
Of the sweet reflecting gladness,
Softened by itself to sadness.—

Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than these!
Throw in, dearer memories!—
Of voices—whereof but to speak,
Makes mine own all sunk and weak;
Of smiles, the thought of which is sweeping
All my soul to floods of weeping;
Of looks, whose absence fain would weigh
My looks to the ground for aye;
Of clasping hands—ah me! I wring
Mine, and in a tremble fling
Downward, downward, all this paining!
Partings, with the sting remaining;
Meetings, with a deeper throe,
Since the joy is ruined so;
Changes, with a fiery burning—
(Shadows upon all the turning.)
Thoughts of—with a storm they came—
Them, I have not breath to name!
Downward, downward, be they cast
In the pit! and now at last
My work beneath the moon is done,
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
All my treasures darkly over.

I will speak not in thine ears,
Only tell my beaded tears
Silently, most silently!
When the last is calmly told,
Let that same moist rosary,
With the rest sepùlchred be.
Finished now. The darksome mould
Sealeth up the darksome pit.
I will lay no stone on it:
Grasses I will sow instead,
Fit for Queen Titania's tread;
Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
And *ai ai* written upon none.
Thus, whenever saileth by
The Lady World of dainty eye,
Not a grief shall here remain,
Silken shoon to damp or stain;
And while she lisps, "I have not seen
Any place more smooth and clean" . .
Here she cometh!—Ha, ha!—who
Laughs as loud as I can do?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.

I.

THE Earth is old;
Six thousand winters make her heart a-cold,
The sceptre slanteth from her palsied hold.
She saith, ' 'Las me!—God's word that I was 'good'
Is taken back to heaven,
From whence when any sound comes, I am riven
By some sharp bolt. And now no angel would
Descend with sweet dew-silence on my mountains,
To glorify the lovely river-fountains
That gush along their side.
I see, O weary change! I see instead
This human wrath and pride,
These thrones, and tombs, judicial wrong, and blood:
And bitter words are poured upon mine head—
'O Earth! thou art a stage for tricks unholy,
A church for most remorseful melancholy!
Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had
An Eden in thee,—wert thou not so sad.'
Sweet children, I am old! ye, every one,
Do keep me from a portion of my sun:

Give praise in change for brightness!
That I may shake my hills in infiniteness
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising Earth.

II.

Whereupon a child began,
With spirit running up to man,
As by angel's shining ladder,
(May he find no cloud above!)
Seeming he had ne'er been sadder
  All his days than now—
Sitting in the chestnut grove,
With that joyous overflow
Of smiling from his mouth, o'er brow
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze
Leaning tricksy from the trees
To part his golden hairs, had blown
Into an hundred smiles that one.

III.

'O rare, rare Earth!' he saith,
  'I will praise thee presently;
Not to-day; I have no breath!
  I have hunted squirrels three—
Two ran down in the furzy hollow,
Where I could not see nor follow;
One sits at the top of the filbert tree,
With a yellow nut, and a mock at me.

Presently it shall be done,
When I see which way those two have run;
When the mocking one at the filbert-top
Shall leap a-down, and beside me stop;
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
Will I pause, having known thy worth,
To say all good of thee!'

IV.

Next a lover, with a dream
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
And a frequent sigh unbidden,
And an idlesse all the day
Beside a wandering stream,
And a silence that is made
Of a word he dares not say,—
Shakes slow his pensive head.
'Earth, Earth!' saith he,
'If spirits, like thy roses, grew
On one stalk, and winds austere
Could but only blow them near,
To share each other's dew;
If, when summer rains agree
To beautify thy hills, I knew
Looking off them I might see
Some one very beauteous too,—
Then Earth,' saith he,
'I would praise . . . nay, nay—*not thee!*'

V.

Will the pedant name her next?
Crabbed with a crabbed text,
Sits he in his study nook,
With his elbow on a book,
And with stately crossed knees,
And a wrinkle deeply thrid
Through his lowering brow,
Caused by making proofs enow,
That Plato in 'Parmenides'
Meant the same Spinosa did;
Or, that an hundred of the groping
Like himself, had made one Homer,—
Homeros being a misnomer.
What hath *he* to do with praise
Of Earth, or aught? whene'er the sloping
Sunbeams through his window daze
His eyes off from the learned phrase,
Straightway he draws close the curtain.
May abstraction keep him dumb!
Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain
'Derivatum est' would come.

VI.

Then a mourner moveth pale
In a silence full of wail,
Raising not his sunken head,
Because he wandered last that way
With that one beneath the clay:

Weeping not, because that one,
The only one who would have said,
'Cease to weep, beloved!' has gone
Whence returneth comfort none.
The silence breaketh suddenly,—
'Earth, I praise thee!' crieth he,
'Thou hast a grave for also *me*.'

VII.

Ha, a poet! know him by
The ecstasy-dilated eye,
Not uncharged with tears that ran
Upward from his heart of man;
By the cheek, from hour to hour,
Kindled bright or sunken wan
With a sense of lonely power;
By the brow uplifted higher
Than others, for more low declining;
By the lip which words of fire
Overflowing have burned white,
While they gave the nations light!
Ay, in every time and place
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade, or shining.

VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
Spreading his impassioned hands.
'O God's Earth!' he saith, 'the sign
From the Father-soul to mine

Of all beauteous mysteries,
Of all perfect images,
Which, divine in His divine,
In my human only are
Very excellent and fair!—
Think not, Earth, that I would raise
Weary forehead in thy praise,
(Weary, that I cannot go
Farther from thy region low,)
If were struck no richer meanings
From thee than thyself. The leanings
Of the close trees o'er the brim
Of a sunshine-haunted stream,
Have a sound beneath their leaves,
  Not of wind, not of wind,
Which the poet's voice achieves.
The faint mountains heaped behind,
Have a falling on their tops,
  Not of dew, not of dew,
Which the poet's fancy drops.
Viewless things his eyes can view;
Driftings of his dream do light
All the skies by day and night;
And the seas that deepest roll,
Carry murmurs of his soul.
Earth, I praise thee! praise thou *me!*
God perfecteth his creation
With this recipient poet-passion,
And makes the beautiful to be.

I praise thee, O beloved sign,
From the God-soul unto mine!
Praise me, that I cast on thee
The cunning sweet interpretation,
The help and glory and dilation
  Of mine immortality!'

IX.

There was silence. None did dare
To use again the spoken air
Of that far-charming voice, until
A Christian resting on the hill,
With a thoughtful smile subdued
(Seeming learnt in solitude)
Which a weeper might have viewed
Without new tears, did softly say,
And looked up unto heaven alway
While he praised the Earth—
'O Earth,
I count the praises thou art worth,
By thy waves that move aloud,
By thy hills against the cloud,
By thy valleys warm and green,
By the copses' elms between,
By their birds which, like a sprite
Scattered, through a strong delight,
Into fragments musical,
Stir and sing in every bush;
By thy silver founts that fall,

As if to entice the stars at night
To thine heart; by grass and rush,
And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers!
—Oh, beautiful
Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
Than in heaven is called good!
Good to us, that we may know
Meekly from thy good to go;
While the holy, crying Blood
Puts its music kind and low,
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
And thine ancient curse!

X.

'Praised be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft,
And the thorns, which make us think
Of the thornless river-brink,
Where the ransomed tread!
Praised be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinished!
Praised be thine active days,
And thy night-time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read
No night shall be therein.
Praised be thy dwellings warm
By household faggot's cheerful blaze,

Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm,
Who croweth to the crackling wood.
Yea,—and better understood,
Praised be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
Where the bodies of the saints,
Separate from earthly taints,
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
Waiting for the trumpet's sound
To free them into blessing;—none
Weeping more beneath the sun,
Though dangerous words of human love
Be graven very near, above.

XI.

'Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,
Even for the change that comes,
With a grief, from thee to us!
For thy cradles and thy tombs;
For the pleasant corn and wine,
And summer-heat; and also for
The frost upon the sycamore,
And hail upon the vine!'

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest.
MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity.*

I.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!
My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or low,
Too far from me or Heaven.
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word being given
By the majestic angel whose command
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and head.
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

II.

And art Thou come for saving, baby-browed
And speechless Being—art Thou come for saving?
The palm that grows beside our door is bowed

By treadings of the low wind from the south,
A restless shadow through the chamber waving:
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun;
But Thou, with that close slumber on thy mouth,
Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.
Art come for saving, O my weary One?

III.

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy soul
High dreams on fire with God;
High songs that make the pathways where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs; and visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory through,
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad upliftings
Of any seraph wing!
Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my dreaming One!

IV.

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through *my* lips to mine heart; to all its shiftings
Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness
In a great calm. I feel, I could lie down
As Moses did, and die,*—and then live most.

* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
That stand with your peculiar light unlost,—
Each forehead with a high thought for a crown,
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware. Ye throw
No shade against the wall! How motionless
Ye round me with your living statuary,
While through your whiteness, in and outwardly,
Continual thoughts of God appear to go,
Like light's soul in itself! I bear, I bear,
To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,
Though their external shining testifies
To that beatitude within which were
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—
I look on His; I know
My spirit which dilateth with the woe
Of His mortality,
May well contain your glory.
Yea, drop your lids more low,—
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me!
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

V.

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem.
The dumb kine from their fodder turning them,
Softened their hornèd faces
To almost human gazes
Toward the newly Born.
The simple shepherds from the star-lit brooks

Brought visionary looks,
As yet in their astonied hearing rung
The strange, sweet angel-tongue.
The magi of the East, in sandals worn,
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
With long pale beards, their gifts upon the ground,—
The incense, myrrh and gold
These baby hands were impotent to hold.
So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon thy royal state!
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

VI.

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest
New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest
On mortal lips,—'I am not proud'—*not proud!*
Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
Albeit over Him my head is bowed,
As others bow before Him, still mine heart
Bows lower than their knees. O centuries
That roll, in vision, your futurities
My future grave athwart,—
Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep
Watch o'er this sleep,—
Say of me as the Heavenly said—'Thou art
The blessedest of women!'—blessedest,
Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,
When I sit meek in heaven!

VII.

For me—for me—
God knows that I am feeble like the rest!—
I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,
Among the midnight hills of Galilee,
Whose summits looked heaven-laden,
Listening to silence, as it seemed to be
God's voice, so soft yet strong—so fain to press
Upon my heart as Heaven did on the height,
And waken up its shadows by a light,
And show its vileness by a holiness.
Then I knelt down most silent like the night,
Too self-renounced for fears,
Raising my small face to the boundless blue
Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears.
God heard *them* falling after—with his dew.

VIII.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
This Incorruptible now born of me—
This fair new Innocence no sun did chance
To shine on, (for even Adam was no child)
Created from my nature all defiled,—
This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—
Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption, more
Than others do, or *I* did heretofore?—
Can hands wherein such burden pure has been,
Not open with the cry 'unclean, unclean!'

More oft than any else beneath the skies?
Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!
The kine, the shepherds, the abasèd wise,
Did all less lowly wait
Than I, upon thy state!—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

IX.

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His universe,
Come, crown me Him a King!
Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling
Their light where fell a curse,
And make a crowning for this kingly brow!—
What is my word?—Each empyrëal star
Sits in a sphere afar
In shining ambuscade:
The child-brow, crowned by none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade.
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

X.

Unchildlike shade!—no other babe doth wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.—
No small babe-smiles, my watching heart has seen,
To float like speech the speechless lips between;
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
No quick short joys of leaping babyhood.
Alas, our earthly good
In heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee:
Yet, sleep, my weary One!

XI.

And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which shall be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword—a sword?—
(*That* 'smites the Shepherd,') then, I think aloud
The words 'despised,'—'rejected,'—every word
Recoiling into darkness as I view
The DARLING on my knee.
Bright angels,—move not!—lest ye stir the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity!
I must not die, with mother's work to do,
And could not live—and see.

XII.

It is enough to bear
This image still and fair—
This holier in sleep,
Than a saint at prayer:
This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled—
This Presence in an infant's face:
This sadness most like love,
This love than love more deep,
This weakness like omnipotence
It is so strong to move!
Awful is this watching place,
Awful what I see from hence—
A king, without regalia,
A God, without the thunder,

A child, without the heart for play;
Ay, a Creator rent asunder
From his first glory and cast away
On His own world, for me alone
To hold in hands created, crying—SON!

XIII.

That tear fell not on THEE
Beloved, yet Thou stirrest in thy slumber!
THOU, stirring not for glad sounds out of number
Which through the vibratory palm trees run
From summer wind and bird,
So quickly hast Thou heard
A tear fall silently?—
Wak'st Thou, O loving One?—

AN ISLAND.

All goeth but Goddis will.—Old poet.

I.

My dream is of an island place
  Which distant seas keep lonely;
A little island, on whose face
  The stars are watchers only.
Those bright still stars! they need not seem
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

II.

An island full of hills and dells,
  All rumpled and uneven
With green recesses, sudden swells,
  And odorous valleys driven
So deep and straight that always there
The wind is cradled to soft air.

III.

Hills running up to heaven for light
  Through woods that half-way ran!

As if the wild earth mimicked right
  The wilder heart of man;
Only it shall be greener far
And gladder than hearts ever are.

IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
  Of Dante's paradise,
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
  In falling from the skies—
Bringing within it, all the roots
Of heavenly trees, and flowers and fruits.

V.

For saving where the grey rocks strike
  Their javelins up the azure,
Or where deep fissures, miser-like,
  Hoard up some fountain treasure,—
(And e'en in them—stoop down and hear—
Leaf sounds with water in your ear!)

VI.

The place is all awave with trees—
  Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,
Acacias having drunk the lees
  Of the night-dew, faint-headed;
And wan, grey olive-woods, which seem
The fittest foliage for a dream.

VII.

Trees, trees on all sides! they combine
  Their plumy shades to throw,
Through whose clear fruit and blossom fine
  Whene'er the sun may go,
The ground beneath he deeply stains,
As passing through cathedral panes.

VIII.

But little needs this earth of ours
  That shining from above her,
When many Pleiades of flowers
  (Not one lost) star her over;
The rays of their unnumbered hues
Being refracted by the dews.

IX.

Wide-petalled plants, that boldly drink
  The Amreeta of the sky;
Shut bells, that, dull with rapture, sink,
  And lolling buds, half shy;
I cannot count them, but between,
Is room for grass and mosses green,

X.

And brooks, that glass in different strengths
  All colours in disorder,
Or gathering up their silver lengths
  Beside their winding border
Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

XI.

Nor think each archéd tree with each
  Too closely interlaces
To admit of vistas out of reach,
  And broad moon-lighted places
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

XII.

For all this island's creature-full,
  Kept happy not by halves;
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pull,
  Then low back at their calves
With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for love.

XIII.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
  And harmless, leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
  And sheep unruled by shepherds;
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

XIV.

And birds that live there in a crowd—
  Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks proud,
  Self-sphered in those grand tails;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem;—
No guns nor springes in my dream!

XV.

The island's edges are a-wing
  With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming
  The curlews to green change,
And doves from half-closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by.

XVI.

One dove is answering in trust
  The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
  Have her mate's cooing in it;
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

XVII.

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder
  To meet the bounding waves!
Beside them straightway I repair,
  To live within the caves;
And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

XVIII.

Long winding caverns! glittering far
  Into a crystal distance;
Through clefts of which, shall many a star
  Shine clear without resistance,
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

XIX.

I said that two or three might choose
  Their dwelling near mine own:
Those who would change man's voice and use
  For Nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

XX.

Ourselves to meet her faithfulness,
  Shall play a faithful part:
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
  The monstrous at our heart;
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

XXI.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
  As doth the moon of ocean,
Though gently as the moon she give
  Our thoughts a light and motion:
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

XXII.

No sod in all that island doth
  Yawn open for the dead;
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath;
  No earth, a mourner's tread:
We cannot say by stream or shade,
'I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed.'

XXIII.

Our only 'farewell' we shall laugh
  To shifting cloud or hour,
And use our only epitaph
  To some bud turned a flower:
Our only tears shall serve to prove
Excess in pleasure or in love.

XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
  From fairest island birds
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,
  Born singing! then our words
Unconsciously shall take the dyes
Of those prodigious fantasies.

XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
  Our smile-tuned lips shall reach;
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth,
  Shall glide into our speech—
(What music certes can you find
As soft as voices which are kind?)

XXVI.

And often by the joy without
  And in us, overcome,
We, through our musing, shall let float
  Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
As Pindar might have writ, if he
Had tended sheep in Arcady;

XXVII.

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
  He died in, longer knowing;
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
  Been lost in Meles flowing;
Or Poet Plato, had the undim
Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy choice,
  To make a place for prayer,
And I will choose a praying voice
  To pour our spirits there.
How silverly the echoes run—
Thy will be done,—thy will be done.

XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words!—
  They lift me from my dream.
The island fadeth with its swards
  That did no more than seem!
The streams are dry, no sun could find—
The fruits are fallen, without wind!—

XXX.

So oft the doing of God's will
  Our foolish wills undoeth!
And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
  Which morning-light subdueth?
And who would murmur and misdoubt,
When God's great sunrise finds him out?

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

Ηδη νοιρους
Πιτασαι ταρσους.
SYNESIUS.

I.

I DWELL amid the city ever.
The great humanity which beats
Its life along the stony streets,
Like a strong and unsunned river
In a self-made course,
I sit and harken while it rolls.
Very sad and very hoarse
Certes is the flow of souls:
Infinitest tendencies,
By the finite, prest and pent,—
In the finite, turbulent.
And how we tremble in surprise,
When sometimes, with an awful sound,
[illegible]'s great plummet strikes the ground!

II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver bit,
As they whirl the rich man's carriage by;
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity.
The trail on the street of the poor man's broom,
That the lady who walks to her palace-home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust:
The tread of the business-men who must
Count their per cents by the paces they take:
The cry of the babe unheard of its mother
Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake.
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and pinks
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day;
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate,
The cabman's cry to get out of the way,
The dustman's call down the area-grate,
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,
The fight in the street which is backed for gold,—
The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall;
The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff,
As he trades in his own grief's sacredness,
The brothel shriek, and the Newgate laugh,
The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding,
The grinder's face being nevertheless

Dry and vacant of even woe
While the children's hearts are leaping so
At the merry music's winding!
The black-plumed funeral's creeping train
Long and slow (and yet they will go
As fast as Life though it hurry and strain!)
Creeping the populous houses through
And nodding their plumes at either side,
At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried;
At many a house, where sitteth a bride
Trying the morrow's coronals
With a scarlet blush to-day.—
  Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise and say,
The living, the living, must go away
    To multiply the dead!
  Hark! an upward shout is sent!
In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
    The bells ring out—
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young Queen goes to her parliament.
She turneth round her large blue eyes
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hopes, upon the people:
On either side she bows her head
  Lowly, with a Queenly grace,
[illegible]ile most trusting-innocent,
        smiled upon her mother!

The thousands press before each other
To bless her to her face:
And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trump and drum,—'May the Queen rejoice
In the people's liberties!'—

III.

I dwell amid the city,
And hear the flow of souls in act and speech,
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly:
I hear the confluence and sum of each,
And that is melancholy!—
Thy voice is a complaint, O crownéd city,
The blue sky covering thee like God's great pity.

IV.

O blue sky! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peakéd hill
Out to the last verge of ocean—
As by God's arm it were done
Then for the first time, with the emotion
Of that first impulse on it still.
Oh, we spirits fly at will,
Faster than the wingéd steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From his flanks to a misty wrack,

And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thundercloud!
Smoother than Sabrina's chair
Gliding up from wave to air,
While she smileth debonair
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own moonéd waters nightly
Through her dripping hair.

V.

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by.
All looks feed not from the eye,
Nor all hearings from the ear;
We can harken and espy
Without either; we can journey
Bold and gay as knight to tourney;
And though we wear no visor down
To dark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go.

VI.

I am gone from peopled town!
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound.
For now another sound, another
Vision my soul's senses have—
O'er a hundred valleys deep,
Where the hills' green shadows sleep

Scarce known because the valley-trees
Cross those upland images—
O'er a hundred hills, each other
Watching to the western wave—
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

VII.

I have found a grassy niche
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur which
Is aspectable from the place
Had struck the hill as with a mace
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June;
A cavelike nook, which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
Instead of spar and stalactite . . .
Cowslips and daisies, gold and white, . .
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,
You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky
As warm and blue as that on high.

VIII.

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep
To be o'erbrowzed by the sheep,—
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet;
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two:
You can hear them as they greet;
You can hear that evermore
Distance-softened noise, more old
Than Nereid's singing,—the tide spent
Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent,—
And when you harken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's communion,
Albeit you witness not the union.

IX.

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences which when you cull
By any word it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul with a soul's strength:
And as they touch your soul, they borrow

As of its grandeur, so its sorrow,—
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

X.

Alway! alway! and must this be?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity?
Green-visioned banks that are too steep
To be o'erbrowzed by the sheep,
May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd?—Mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
And fit it to our straitest mood?—
O fair, fair Nature! are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,
Wealth and sanctities,—that still
Leave us vacant and defiled,
And wailing like a kissed child,
Kissed soft against his will?

XI.

God, God!—
With a child's voice I cry,
Weak, sad, confidingly—
God, God!

Thou knowest eyelids raised not always up
Unto Thy love, (as none of ours are) droop,
As ours, o'er many a tear!
Thou knowest, though thy universe is broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all.
Thou knowest,—Thou, who art so prodigal
Of beauty,—we are oft but stricken deer
Expiring in the woods—that care for none
Of those delightsome flowers they die upon.

XII.

O blissful Mouth, which breathed the mournful breath
We name our souls,—self spoilt!—by that strong passion
Which paled thee once with sighs,—by that strong death
Which made thee once unbreathing—from the wrack
Themselves have called around them, call them back
Back to thee in continuous aspiration!
For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly,—vainly pass
From city pavement to untrodden sward,
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea, very vain
The greatest speed of all these souls of men,
Unless they travel upward to Thy Throne!
There, sittest THOU, the satisfying ONE,
With help for sins and holy perfectings
For all requirements—while the archangel, raising
Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
the rush and rapture of his wings!

TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.

"I have the second sight, Goethe!"—*Letters of a Child.*

I.

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
Upturning worship and delight
With such a loving duty
To his grand face, as women will,
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still?

II.

Before his shrine to doom thee
Using the same child's smile
That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
For the first time, won from thee,
Ere star and flower grew dim and dead,
Save at his feet and o'er his head.

III.

Digging thine heart and throwing
Away its childhood's gold,
That so its woman-depth might hold
His spirit's overflowing.
For surging souls, no worlds can bound,
Their channel in the heart have found.

IV.

O child, to change appointed,
Thou hadst not second sight!
What eyes the future view aright,
Unless by tears anointed?
Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow.

V.

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight!
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

VI.

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope, came back to thee
Without a leaf. Art laying
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom secretly?

VII.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight!
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

VIII.

Where's childhood? where is Goethe?
The tears are in thine eyes.
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganise
Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

IX.

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
Of his great genius round thee,—
The childlike poet undefiled
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
Did look upon the earth and say—

'Purple cloud the hill-top binding,
Folded hills the valleys wind in,
Valleys, with fresh streams among you,—
Streams, with bosky trees along you,—
Trees, with many birds and blossoms,—
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,—
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreathe you,
To your fellow flowers beneath you,—
Flowers, that constellate on earth,—
Earth, that shakest to the mirth
Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion!
Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun?'

But when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven and smiled at last,

Self-answered so—
'Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain top,—
Hills that almost seem to drop,
Stricken with a misty death,
To the valleys underneath,—
Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
Waters, streaked with branches horrent,—
Branchless trees, that shake your head
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are found,—
Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—
Ground, that shriekest while the sea
With his iron smiteth thee—
I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun.'

A SEA-SIDE WALK.

I.

We walked beside the sea
After a day which perished silently
Of its own glory—like the Princess weird
Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,
Uttered with burning breath, 'Ho! victory!'
And sank adown an heap of ashes pale.
So runs the Arab tale.

II.

The sky above us showed
A universal and unmoving cloud,
On which the cliffs permitted us to see
Only the outline of their majesty,
As master-minds when gazed at by the crowd!
And, shining with a gloom, the water grey
Swang in its moon-taught way.

III.

Nor moon, nor stars were out.
They did not dare to tread so soon about,

Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun.
The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt;
And Silence's impassioned breathings round
Seemed wandering into sound.

IV.

O solemn-beating heart
Of nature! I have knowledge that thou art
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever—
And, what time they are slackened by him ever
So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong
The slackened cord along.

V.

For though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,—
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we used
Of absent friends and memories unforsook,
And, had we seen each other's face, we had
Seen haply, each was sad.

THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M. E. H.

I.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A forward shade, the only one,
(But shadows ever man pursue.)

II.

Familiar with the waves and free
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart, upon the heart of ocean,
Lay learning all its mystic motion
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III.

And such a brightness in his eye,
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder!

V.

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place, where he might view
The flowers that curtsey to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;
And when earth's dew around him lay
He thought of ocean's wingéd spray,
And his eye waxéd sad and dim.

VII.

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade;
And drooped his wing, and mournéd he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

VIII.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

IX.

He lay down in his grief to die,
(First looking to the sea-like sky
That hath no waves!) because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass
And with our touch, our agony.

FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THAT POETESS.

—♦—

I.

THOU bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned
Dead art bowing,
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow
throwing,
And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music
wedding,
Dropping above the tranquil eyes, the tears not of their
shedding!—

II.

Take music from the silent Dead, whose meaning is
completer;
Reserve thy tears for living brows where all such tears
are meeter;
And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where
thou treadest!
No flowers for her! no need of flowers—albeit 'bring
flowers,' thou saidest.

III.

Yes, flowers, to crown the 'cup and lute!' since both
may come to breaking:
Or flowers, to greet the 'bride!' the heart's own
beating works its aching:
Or flowers, to soothe the 'captive's' sight, from earth's
free bosom gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it
withered!

IV.

But bring not near the solemn corse, the type of human
seeming!
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming!
And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it
solely,
Her spheréd soul shall look on *them* with eyes more
bright and holy.

V.

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was
mourning.
Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the
burning?—
The minstrel harp, for the strained string? the tripod,
for the afflated
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone
dilated?

VI.

Perhaps she shuddered, while the world's cold hand her
brow was wreathing,
But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed
in all her breathing,
Which drew from rocky earth, and man, abstractions,
high and moving—
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight: the Saviour she
descrieth,
And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His
bosom lieth.
The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments,
flowing,
There, learneth she the sweet 'new song,' she will not
mourn in knowing.

VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living One! and, as thy dust
decayeth,
May thine own England say for thee, what now for Her
it sayeth—
'Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,
The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her
singing!'

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

From her poem written during the voyage to the Cape.

I.

'Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?'—She said it from the sea,
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,
While under brighter skies than erst she knew
Her heart grew dark,—and groped there, as the blind,
To reach across the waves friends left behind—
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

II.

It seemed not much to ask—As *I* of *you?*—
We all do ask the same. No eyelids cover
Within the meekest eyes, that question over,—
And little in the world the Loving do
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
The echo of their own love evermore—
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

III.

Love-learned she had sung of love and love,—
And, like a child that sleeping with dropt head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round him move
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

IV.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,—
When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries
Were broken in her visionary eyes
By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
She asked not,—Do you praise me, O my land?—
But,—'Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?'

V.

Hers was the hand that played for many a year
Love's silver phrase for England,—smooth and well!
Would God, her heart's more inward oracle
In that lone moment might confirm her dear!
For when her questioned friends in agony
Made passionate response,—'We think of *thee*,'—
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

VI.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
Was she content—content—with ocean's sound,
Which dashed its mocking infinite around
One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
Those stars, content,—where last her song had gone,—
They, mute and cold in radiant life,—as soon
Their singer was to be, in darksome death? *

VII.

Bring your vain answers—cry, 'We think of *thee!*'
How think ye of her? warm in long ago
Delights?—or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,—
With all her visions unfulfilled save one—
Her childhood's—of the palm-trees in the sun—
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

VIII.

'Do ye think of me as I think of you?'—
O friends,—O kindred,—O dear brotherhood
Of all the world! what are we, that we should
For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other when the touch
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much,
Is this 'Think of me as I think of you.'

* Her lyric on the polar star, came home with her latest papers.

IX.

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues,—verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
A vocal pathos rolls! and HE who drew
All life from dust, and for all, tasted death,
By death and life and love, appealing, saith,
Do you think of me as I think of you?

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

I.

When last before her people's face her own fair face she bent,
Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if it might
Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in sight—
To erase it with a solemn vow,—a princely vow—to rule—
A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful,—
A very godlike vow—to rule in right and righteousness,
And with the law and for the land!—so God the vower bless!

II.

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween,
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisled scene.

The priests stood stoled in their pomp, the sworded
chiefs in theirs,
And so, the collared knights,—and so, the civil
ministers,—
And so, the waiting lords and dames—and little pages
best
At holding trains—and legates so, from countries east
and west—
So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies
bright,
Along whose brows the Queen's, new crowned, flashed
coronets to light.—
And so, the people at the gates, with priestly hands on
high,
Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty :
And so the DEAD—who lie in rows beneath the minster
floor,
There, verily an awful state maintaining evermore—
The statesman whose clean palm will kiss no bribe
whate'er it be ;
The courtier who, for no fair queen, will rise up to his
knee ;
The court-dame who, for no court-tire, will leave her
shroud behind ;
The laureate who no courtlier rhyme than 'dust to
dust' can find :
The kings and queens who having made that vow and
worn that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown !

Dieu et mon droit—what is 't to them?—what meaning
can it have?—
The King of kings, the right of death—God's judgment
and the grave!
And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair
queen had vowed,
The living shouted 'May she live! Victoria, live!'
aloud—
And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed
between,
'The blessings happy monarchs have, be thine,
O crowned queen!'

III.

But now before her people's face she bendeth her's anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness there-
unto.
She vowed to rule, and, in that oath, her childhood put
away—
She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love
to-day.
O, lovely lady!—let her vow!—such lips become such
vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal
brows.
O, lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea, let her vow to
love!—
And though she be no less a queen—with purples hung
above,

The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to ground,
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that state,
While loving hopes, for retinues, about her sweetness wait.
SHE vows to love who vowed to rule—the chosen at her side;
Let none say, God preserve the queen!—but rather, Bless the bride!
None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate the dream
Wherein no monarch but a wife, she to herself may seem.
Or if ye say, Preserve the queen!—oh, breathe it inward low—
She is a *woman*, and *beloved!*—and 'tis enough but so.
Count it enough, thou noble prince, who tak'st her by the hand,
And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady of the land!
And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg were,—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts, and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,

Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing.

IV.

And now, upon our queen's last vow, what blessings shall we pray?
None, straitened to a shallow crown, will suit our lips to-day.
Behold, they must be free as love—they must be broad as free,
Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's humanity.
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts—and true hearts pray between,—
'The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O crowned queen!'

CROWNED AND BURIED.

I.

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that great word
Compact of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

II.

Napoleon! Nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame—
And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,
Near their last silence, uttered it for God's.

III.

Napoleon! Sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem: children small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call:

Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sate alone.

IV.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid,—
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose
In search of eyries; and the Egyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand 'For ever.'

V.

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness. Shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

VI.

The world's face changed to hear it. Kingly men
Came down, in chidden babes' bewilderment,
From autocratic places—each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing;—then
The people laughed or wondered for the nonce
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

VII.

Napoleon! even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disastrous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood.
Napoleon—from the Russias, west to Spain!
And Austria trembled—till ye heard her chain.

VIII.

And Germany was 'ware—and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked,—
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
To serve a newer.—Ay! but Frenchmen cast
A future from them nobler than her past.

IX.

For, verily, though France augustly rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
The purple of the world,—none gave so much
As she, in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped paralyzed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

X.

King's crown to a great man's head. And though along
Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams

Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
No dream, of all so won, was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI.

Napoleon! 'twas a high name lifted high!
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
Our compassing and covering atmosphere
And open a clear sight beyond the sky
Of supreme empire; this of earth's was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

XII.

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at home,
And finding the long-invocated peace
A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine, too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

XIII.

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose—
The nations stood up mute to count their dead—
And *he* who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes
When earth was all too grey for chivalry,
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

XIV.

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,—
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

XV.

Nay! not so long!—France kept her old affection
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
Until dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, 'Behold, thou England! I would have
The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave.'

XVI.

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—
'Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me.'
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous claim—
But ask a little room too . . . for thy shame!

XVII.

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart

To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England! men might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

XVIII.

I would that hostile fleets had scarred this bay,*
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a *shadow*—not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun!
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!

XIX.

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile.—We return
Orestes to Electra . . . in his urn.

XX.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth albeit
To-day a four-years child might carry it
Sleek-browed and smiling 'Let the burden 'bide!'
Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

* Written at Torquay.

XXI.

And run back in the chariot-marks of Time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor, death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
And martial music,—under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz.

XXII.

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room!—
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column! *

XXIII.

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields; provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts!—And this he *may*. For, dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

XXIV.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world! and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom won—
The last—of few spans—by Napoleon.

XXV.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth!
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted!
But the αυτος of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French: he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied.

XXVI.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
'Ye have my glory!'—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but none
Were ruled like slaves: each felt Napoleon.

XXVII.

I do not praise this man: the man was flawed
For Adam—much more, Christ!—his knee, unbent—
His hand, unclean—his aspiration, pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

XXVIII.

I think this nation's tears thus poured together,
Worthier than shouts; I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all;
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be better, I discern not—Angels may.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

I.

Loving friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith hath run,
  Through thy lower nature,*
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
  Gentle fellow-creature!

II.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
  Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast
Shining out from all the rest
  Of thy body purely.

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown.

III.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
  Alchemise its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
  With a burnished fulness.

IV.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
  Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
  Leaping like a charger.

V.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light;
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
  Canopied in fringes.
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
  Down their golden inches.

VI.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is 't to such an end
  That I praise thy rareness!
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears,
  And this glossy fairness.

VII.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
  Day and night unweary,—
Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
  Round the sick and dreary.

VIII.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
  Beam and breeze resigning—
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone
  Love remains for shining.

IX.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
  Sunny moor or meadow—
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
  Sharing in the shadow.

X.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
  Up the woodside hieing—
This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
  Or a louder sighing.

XI.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
  Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
  In a tender trouble.

XII.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
  Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
  On the palm left open.

XIII.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blyther choice
  Than such chamber-keeping,
'Come out!' praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
  Up against me leaping.

XIV.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
  Render praise and favour:
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
  Therefore, and for ever.

XV.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
  Often, man or woman,—
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,—
  Leaning from my Human.

XVI.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
  Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motion fail
  Nevermore, to pat thee!

XVII.

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
  Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up—
No man break thy purple cup,
  Set for drinking deep in.

XVIII.

Whiskered cats arointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
  Cologne distillations;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
  Turn to daily rations!

XIX.

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
  Thou art made so straightly,
Blessing needs must straighten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
  Thou who lovest *greatly*.

XX.

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
  Pervious to thy nature,
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
  Loving fellow-creature!

THE LOST BOWER.

I.

In the pleasant orchard closes,
'God bless all our gains,' say we;
But 'May God bless all our losses,'
Better suits with our degree.—
Listen, gentle—ay, and simple! Listen, children on the knee!

II.

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played—
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;
Summer-snow of apple blossoms, running up from glade to glade.

III.

There is one hill I see nearer
In my vision of the rest;
And a little wood seems clearer,

As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest.

IV.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
Thrills in leafy tremblement,
Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through content.

V.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-top's bound:
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground:
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and glad with sound.

VI.

For you hearken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all,
And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful madrigal.

VII.

On your left; the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale;
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale,
Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their
'All hail!'

VIII.

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of
paradise.

IX.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods alsò,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine and the snow.*

X.

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey:
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langlande's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

The least mischief worth a nay—
Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday.

XI.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a glamour past dispute,

XII.

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced, with snowy wool, to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the sun.

XIII.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow:
I could pierce them! *I* could longer
Travel on, methought, than so.
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver children climb and creep where they would go.

XIV.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude!

Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood—
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

XV.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving, in their island-citadel.

XVI.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me and the barrier branches strong.

XVII.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonied—I was gladdened unaware.

XVIII.

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated

Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

XIX.

Here a linden-tree stood, brightening
All adown its silver rind,
For as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky where it was shrined.

XX.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that Bower of beauty which I sing of thus to you.

XXI.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide:
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning plied.

XXII.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than for footsteps on the walk.

XXIII.

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place!
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the base.

XXIV.

And the ivy veined and glossy
Was enwrought with eglantine;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window mullion, did right sylvanly entwine.

XXV.

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the wall.

XXVI.

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot:
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

XXVII.

All the floor was paved with glory,—
Greenly, silently inlaid,
Through quick motions made before me
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

XXVIII.

'Is such pavement in a palace?'
So I questioned in my thought:
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

XXIX.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves downward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing well.

XXX.

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place
To the trees, which surely knew it in partaking of the grace.

XXXI.

Where's no foot of human creature,
How could reach a human hand?
And if this be work of nature,
Why is nature sudden bland,
Breaking off from other wild work? It was hard to understand.

XXXII.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause in tender rueing,
Here, of all her sylvan scorn?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the sudden mildness worn?

XXXIII.

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chancèd
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland, on the last true poet's

XXXIV.

Or was this house the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessed
Sabbath days?

XXXV.

So, young muser, I sate listening
To my fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt
than heard.

XXXVI.

Softly, finely, it inwound me—
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little marble Naiad sitting smilingly within.

XXXVII.

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
I know nothing. But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest
riverhead.

XXXVIII.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX.

Never nightingale so singeth—
Oh! she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-soul she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me.

XL.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes,
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens complete.

XLI.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

XLII.

If it *were* a bird!—ah, sceptic,
Give me 'Yea' or give me 'Nay'—
Though my soul were nympholeptic,
As I heard that virëlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away.

XLIII.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet
Like a garment rustling downwards!—such a silence followed it.

XLIV.

Heart and head beat through the quiet
Full and heavily, though slower.
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to the Hour.

XLV.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past;
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine I all consciously was cast.

XLVI.

Face to face with the true mountains
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength for fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonair
goodwill.

XLVII.

Oh! the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
Of the beauty of the truth,
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

XLVIII.

And I said within me laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus—fashioned half in
Chance, and half in Nature's play—
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

XLIX.

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
Of this bower, not built by one;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison,
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I
have won.

L.

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning!
This is truth in its pure grace!)
The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering missed the place.

LI.

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew—
By the advent of the snow-drop—by the rosemary and rue,—

LII.

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I nevermore, upon it, turned my mortal countenance.

LIII.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair—
Never garden-creeper crossed it,
With so deft and brave an air—
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them there.'

LIV.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith—
Under leaf and over brier—
Through the thickets, out of breath—
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long as death.

LV.

But his sword of mettle clashèd.
And his arm smote strong, I ween;
And her dreaming spirit flashèd
Through her body's fair white screen,
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys green.

LVI.

But for me, I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Œdipus's grave-place, 'mid Colone's olives swart.

LVII.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four-and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun;
So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up, and I looked down.

LVIII.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
As the little bower did then;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again?
Ah! I cannot change this sighing for your smiling,
brother-men!

LIX.

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigour,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a
wood.

LX.

I have lost—oh many a pleasure—
Many a hope, and many a power—
Studious health and merry leisure—
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

LXI.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done—
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompletion, in the face of what is
won—

LXII.

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is—
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for the very shame
of bliss.

LXIII.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought
to take.

LXIV.

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

LXV.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look away;—
Ye would answer me, 'Farewell! you
Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words
you say.'

LXVI.

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial,
All the sun and all the shower!
And I suffered many losses; and my first was of the bower.

LXVII.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be great.

LXVIII.

One who knew me in my childhood
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes overcame.

LXIX.

By this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I beheld the bower arise.

LXX.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind—
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either entertwined;
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown nor pined.

LXXI.

From those overblown faint roses,
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red,
For the winters and the summers which have passed me overhead.

LXXII.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves;
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth?
Fay or Faunus—who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me, to the trembling of the leaves.

LXXIII.

Is the bower lost, then? Who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and uttermost—

LXXIV.

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne,
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—'ALL IS LOST . . . and *won!*'

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid,
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I.
The sheep looked in the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me!
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
  Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white
Well satisfied with dew and light
  And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him
  On these the most of all,—

Some Lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
  That likened her to such.

Or these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind
  That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that Lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
  And silk was changed for shroud!—

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
  'The time will pass away.'

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
  My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away;
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
  Did I look up to pray!

The time is past:—and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
  As well as the white rose,—

When wiser, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
  The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
  That happy child again.

MY DOVES.

O Weisheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube!—GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest
  Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
  Or motion from the sea:
For, ever there, the sea-winds go
With sun-lit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
  The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit,
  With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their right
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
  Of murmuring waves beyond,
And green leaves round, to interpose
  Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves,
  Theirs hath the calmest fashion;
Their living voice the likest moves
  To lifeless intonation,—
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
  From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
  And tempest-clouded airs.
My little doves!—who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and blue!

And now, within the city prison,
  In mist and chilliness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
  For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion—
  The triumph of the mart—
The gold and silver as they clash on
  Man's cold metallic heart—
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,—
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean—
(Their eyes, with such a plaintive shine,
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone,
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown,
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories:
All echoings from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street!
But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song,
And lasting thankfulness,
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields:
I will have humble thoughts instead
Of silent, dewy fields:
My spirit and my God shall be
My sea-ward hill, my boundless sea!

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

—♦—

I.

NINE years old! The first of any
  Seem the happiest years that come;
  Yet when *I* was nine, I said
  No such word!—I thought, instead,
That the Greeks had used as many
  In besieging Ilium.

II.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
  To my childhood's haunted spring:
  I had life, like flowers and bees
  In betwixt the country trees;
And the sun the pleasure taught me
  Which he teacheth every thing.

III.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow;—
  Little head leant on the pane,
  Little finger drawing down it
  The long trailing drops upon it,—
And the 'Rain, rain, come to-morrow,'
  Said for charm against the rain.

IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian,
  Though you meet it with a jeer!
  If I said it long enough,
  Then the rain hummed dimly off,
And the thrush with his pure Lydian,
  Was left only, to the ear:

V.

And the sun and I together
  Went a-rushing out of doors;
  We, our tender spirits, drew
  Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
  In the footsteps of the showers.

VI.

Underneath the chesnuts dripping,
  Through the grasses wet and fair,
  Straight I sought my garden-ground
  With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
  A side-shadow of green air.

VII.

In the garden lay supinely
  A huge giant wrought of spade!
  Arms and legs were stretched at length
  In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
  Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam!
  Such his title and degree.
  With my rake I smoothed his brow;
  Both his cheeks I weeded through;
But a rhymer such as I am,
  Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
  Staring, winking at the skies;
  Nose of gillyflowers and box;
  Scented grasses put for locks—
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,
  Set a-waving round his eyes.

X.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
  With a glitter toward the light;
  Purple violets, for the mouth,
  Breathing perfumes west and south;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
  Holden ready for the fight.

XI.

And a breastplate made of daisies,
  Closely fitting, leaf on leaf;
  Periwinkles interlaced
  Drawn for belt about the waist;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
  Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII.

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)
  If the disembodied soul
  Of old Hector, once of Troy,
  Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered
  Rolling up the thunder-roll?

XIII.

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
  In this body rude and rife
  He might enter, and take rest
  'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
  His heroic heart to life.

XIV.

Who could know? I sometimes started
  At a motion or a sound!
  Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,
  With an *οτοτοτοτοι*?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
  Make the daisies tremble round?

XV.

It was hard to answer, often:
  But the birds sang in the tree—
  But the little birds sang bold,
  In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
  Through the courage of their glee.

XVI.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms, sleek with rain!
Oh, my garden, rich with pansies!
Oh, my childhood's bright romances!
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again!

XVII.

And despite life's changes—chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming!—
Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul!

XVIII.

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

I.

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,
  Tired of all the playing,—
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
  That you dropped away in!
On your curl's full roundness, stand
  Golden lights serenely—
One cheek pushed out by the hand
  Folds the dimple inly:
Little head and little foot
  Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half-shut,
  Slants the shining azure;—
Open-soul in noonday sun,
  So, you lie and slumber!
Nothing evil having done,
  Nothing can encumber.

II.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
  Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
  All that may undo you?
Nay, keep smiling, little child,
  Ere the sorrow neareth,—
I will smile too. Patience mild
  Pleasure's token weareth.
Nay, keep sleeping before loss;
  I shall sleep though losing!
As by cradle, so by cross,
  Sure is the reposing.

III.

And God knows who sees us twain,
  Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
  As you seem of pleasure;—
Very soon too, by His grace
  Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
  Shall I sleep as soundly!
Differing in this, that you
  Clasp your playthings sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
  Given to my keeping!
Differing in this, that I
  Sleeping shall be colder,

And in waking presently,
  Brighter to beholder!
Differing in this beside
  (Sleeper, have you heard me?
Do you move, and open wide
  Eyes of wonder toward me?)—
That while you I thus recall
  From your sleep,—I solely,—
Me from mine an angel shall,
  With reveillie holy!

A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

I.

THEY bid me sing to thee,
Thou golden-haired and silver-voicéd child,
With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's defiled,
With eyes unknowing how tears dim the sight,
With feet all trembling at the new delight
Treaders of earth to be!

II.

Ah no! the lark may bring
A song to thee from out the morning cloud,
The merry river from its lilies bowed,
The brisk rain from the trees, the lucky wind,
That half doth make its music, half doth find,—
But *I*—I may not sing.

III.

How could I think it right,
New-comer on our earth as, Sweet, thou art,
To bring a verse from out an human heart,
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of weary years
Thy day-sum of delight?

IV.

Even if the verse were said,
Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny hands to hear
The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear,
Wouldst, at that sound of sad humanities,
Upturn thy bright uncomprehending eyes
And bid me play instead.

V.

Therefore no song of mine!
But prayer in place of singing! prayer that would
Commend thee to the new-creating God,
Whose gift is childhood's heart without its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and changing vain—
That gift of God be thine!

VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shining brow
And pretty winning accents make thee now!

Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate sound
(How sweet!) of 'father,' 'mother,' shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII.

And so, as years shall chase
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less resemble
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,
Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
The Ever-loving's face.

WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC.,

TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

I.

If old Bacchus were the speaker
  He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
  I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
  At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By queen Juno brushed aside, a
  Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

II.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler,
  When the drink is so divine:
And some deep-mouthed Greek exampler
  Would become your Cyprus wine!
Cyclop's mouth might plunge aright in,
  While his one eye over-leered—
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
  Drinking rivers down his beard.

III.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
  That his ears alone pricked out,
Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
  Each one pointing to his throat:
While the Naiads like Bacchantes,
  Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry,—'O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
  Springs to keep, of such a taste!'

IV.

But for me, I am not worthy
  After gods and Greeks to drink;
And my lips are pale and earthy
  To go bathing from this brink.
Since you heard them speak the last time,
  They have faded from their blooms,
And the laughter of my pastime
  Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V.

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
  Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
  In the forms they thought of, now?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
  Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
  May strike scarlet down the cheek?

VI.

Do not mock me! with my mortal,
  Suits no wreath again, indeed!
I am sad-voiced as the turtle
  Which Anacreon used to feed;
Yet as that same bird demurely
  Wet her beak in cup of his,—
So, without a garland, surely
  I may touch the brim of this.

VII.

Go!—let others praise the Chian!—
  This is soft as Muses' string—
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
  This is rapid as its spring,—
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
  Light as ever trod her feet!
And the brown bees of Hymettus
  Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII.

Very copious are my praises,
  Though I sip it like a fly!—
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
  Change before me suddenly—
As Ulysses' old libation
  Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
  Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX.

And I think of those long mornings
  Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
  Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek.
Past the pane, the mountain spreading,
  Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling noise,
While a girlish voice was reading,—
  Somewhat low for *αι* s and *οι* s.

X.

Then what golden hours were for us!—
  While we sate together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
  Seemed to wave up a live air!
How the cothurns trod majestic
  Down the deep iambic lines;
And the rolling anapæstic
  Curled like vapour over shrines!

XI.

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous!
  How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
  In the gnarled oak beneath.
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
  Who was born to monarch's place—
And who made the whole world loyal,
  Less by kingly power than grace.

XII.

Our Euripides, the human—
With his droppings of warm tears;
And his touches of things common,
Till they rose to touch the spheres!
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals!—
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

XIII.

And my Plato, the divine one,—
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light!—
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek:
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.

XIV.

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him,
With his liberal mouth of gold;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old:
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies;—
Who forged first his linked stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

XV.

And we both praised your Synesius
  For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious
  As he whistled dogs and gods.—
And we both praised Nazianzen
  For the fervid heart and speech;
Only I eschewed his glancing
  At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI.

Do you mind that deed of Até
  Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading 'De Virginitate,'
  From the first line to the last?
How I said at ending, solemn,
  As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
  Had had somewhat less to do?

XVII.

For we sometimes gently wrangled;
  Very gently, be it said,—
Since our thoughts were disentangled
  By no breaking of the thread!
And I charged you with extortions
  On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
  Stained the purple they would fold.

XVIII.

For the rest—a mystic moaning,
  Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in—
  And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
  By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
  Turned to ocean and the sun.

XIX.

And Medea we saw burning
  At her nature's planted stake;
And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
  While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow—slower,
  Till he stood discrowned, resigned!—
But the reader's voice dropped lower
  When the poet called him BLIND!

XX.

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
  And more learned, and a man!—
Yet that shadow—the enfolder
  Of your quiet eyelids—ran
Both our spirits to one level,
  And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-sun's green revel,—
  To your eyes that could not see.

XXI.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
  Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
  Shed their fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
  All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sate in the chamber,
  And the poets poured us wine?

XXII.

So, to come back to the drinking
  Of this Cyprus,—it is well—
But those memories, to my thinking,
  Make a better œnomel;
And whoever be the speaker,
  None can murmur with a sigh—
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
  I am sipping like a fly.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

—♦—

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."

POEMS ON MAN, BY CORNELIUS MATHEWS.*

I.

We are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange!
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery,
Which smiles with a change!
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces,
The Heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;
And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth;
And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
The apple of Life which another has found;—
It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four—
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore.

* A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable in thought and manner for a vital sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder.

II.

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther:
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
And the lilies look large as the trees;
And as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,—
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,
And the cedars are brushing the archangel's feet,
And time is eternity,—love is divine,
And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond!
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

III.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
And the earth rings again,
And we breathe out, 'O beauty,'—we cry out, 'O truth,'
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine;
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline,—
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—
What is this exultation? and what this despair?—
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet;
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon, . .
And we think him so near he is this side the sun,

And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

IV.

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures
Which hideth the soul;
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us, flies out with a wound,—
And we shout so aloud, 'We exult, we rejoice,'
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around,—
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound
We are deaf to God's voice—
And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears
Yet we are not ashamed,
And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
Help us, God, trust us, man, love us, woman! 'I hold
Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the troth—
I love thee, I leave thee,—
Live for thee, die for thee!

I prove thee, deceive thee,—
Undo evermore thee!
Help me, God, slay me, man!—one is mourning for both!'
And we stand up though young near the funeral-sheet
Which covers the Cæsar and old Pharamond,
And death is so nigh us Life cools from its heat—
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair,—*art* thou sweet?

V.

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up erect—
We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds,
We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked,
We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,—
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole,—
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll!
'While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn?
Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To a pale unanimity.
Speed me, God!—serve me, man!—I am god over men!
When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again—
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and mourn at my feet!'—
O thou Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VI.

Then we grow into thought,—and with inward ascensions
Touch the bounds of our Being!
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
With our sensual relations and social conventions,
Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides
With its infinite tides
About and above us,—until the strong arch
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
And through the dim rolling, we hear the sweet calling
Of spirits that speak, in a soft under-tongue,
The sense of the mystical march;
And we cry to them softly, 'Come nearer, come nearer,
And lift up the lap of this Dark, and speak clearer,
And teach us the song that ye sung.'
And we smile in our thought if they answer or no,—
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know!
Wonders breathe in our face
And we ask not their name;
Love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison-place!
And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud;
And we send up the lark of our music that cuts
Untired through the cloud,
To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts;
Yet the angels look down and the mortals look up
As the little wings beat,

And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
'Twixt the Heavens and the earth, *can* a poet despond ?
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

VII.

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength.
And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken ;
And bringing our lives to the level of others,
Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length—
'Help me, God ! love me, man ! I am man among men,
And my life is a pledge
Of the ease of another's ! '
From the fire and the water we drive out the steam
With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream,
And the car without horses the car without wings
Roars onward and flies
On its pale iron edge,
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes ;
And the hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,—
And, lifting a fold of the smooth flowing Thames,
Draws under, the world with its turmoils and pothers,
While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
By Humanity's hum at the root of the springs !
And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps
Of the souls of our brothers,—
We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,

'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which they harken and
think
And work into harmony, link upon link,
Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
Shedding sparks of electric responding intense
On the dark of eclipse!
Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
As from shores of a star
In aphelion,—the new generations that cry
In attune to our voice and harmonious reply,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth!'
We are glorious forsooth—
And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned!
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VIII.

Help me, God—help me, man; I am low, I am weak—
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins;
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains,
From my spirit's serene;
And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
On my organised clay.
I sob not, nor shriek,
Yet I faint fast away!
I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-
eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,

On the Heaven-heights of truth!
Oh, the soul keeps its youth—
But the body faints sore, it is tired in the race,—
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal,
It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold—
It sinks back, with the death in its face,
On, chariot—on, soul,—
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

IX.

Love us, God, love us, man! we believe, we achieve—
Let us love, let us live,
For the acts correspond—
We are glorious—and DIE!
And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
That smiles with a change,
Here we lie.
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

——"discordance that can accord."
ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
On a tall bough and straight!
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For if I wait,' said she,
'Till time for roses be,—
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,—

'What glory then for me
In such a company?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty?

'Nay, let me in,' said she,
'Before the rest are free,—
In my loneness, in my loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For I would lonely stand
Uplifting my white hand,
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

'Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine?
What addressing, what caressing!
And what thanks and praise and blessing!

'A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

'Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

'And every moth and bee
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

'Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed—
Singing gladly all the moontide,—
Never waiting for the suntide.

'Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,—
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

'I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When low on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy!

'And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,—
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling.'

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah!—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green,
Scarcely having, scarcely having
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,—
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce strong enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas.
Guess him in the Happy islands,
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both
Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown,
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the Earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose—'Ha, Snow!'
And art thou fallen so?
Thou, who wert enthroned stately
All along my mountains, lately?

'Holla, thou world-wide snow!
And art thou wasted so?
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee?

—Poor Rose, to be misknown!
Would, she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneness, in her loneness,—
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say—
Some *no* . . . . ah, wellaway!
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her—

Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, 'Verily and thus
It chanceth eke with *us*
Poets singing sweetest snatches,
While that deaf men keep the watches—

'Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a loneness, in a loneness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

'Holy in voice and heart,—
To high ends, set apart!
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated.

'But if alone we be,
Where is our empery?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can praise our lofty nature?

'What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimed ringing?

'What angel, but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration.

'And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season?

'Drop leaf—be silent song—
Cold things we come among:
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

'Howbeit' (here his face
Lightened around the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of his spirit's inward burning)—

'Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

'Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow!

'Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us.

'Though none us deign to bless,
Blessed are we, nathless;
Blessed still and consecrated,
In that, rose, we were created.

'Oh, shame to poet's lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi.*

'Shame, shame to poet's soul
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit!

'Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones!
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you!

'Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

'In prayers—that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

'In faith—that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission—
With an unfulfilled fruition!

'In hope—that apprehends
An end beyond these ends;
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly!

'In thanks—for all the good
By poets understood—
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

'For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

'For life, so lovely-vain,—
For death, which breaks the chain,—
For this sense of present sweetness,—
And this yearning to completeness!'

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

I.

SAID a people to a poet—'Go out from among us straightway!
While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine;
There's a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the gateway,
Makes fitter music to our ear, than any song of thine!'

II.

The poet went out weeping—the nightingale ceased chanting;
'Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?'
'I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun.'

III.

The poet went out weeping,—and died abroad, bereft there—
The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails;—
And, when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

I.

'THERE is no God,' the foolish saith,—
But none, 'There is no sorrow;'
And nature oft, the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow:
Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raised;
And lips say, 'God be pitiful,'
Who ne'er said, 'God be praised.'
Be pitiful, O God!

II.

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming;
The beasts grow tame, and near us creep,
As help were in the human,
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and grind,
We spirits tremble under!—
The hills have echoes, but we find
No answer for the thunder.
Be pitiful, O God!

III.

The battle hurtles on the plains—
  Earth feels new scythes upon her;
We reap our brothers for the wains,
  And call the harvest . . honour,—
Draw face to face, front line to line,
  One image all inherit,—
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
  Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.
                Be pitiful, O God!

IV.

The plague runs festering through the town,
  And never a bell is tolling,
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
  Nod to the dead-cart's rolling;
The young child calleth for the cup—
  The strong man brings it weeping;
The mother from her babe looks up,
  And shrieks away its sleeping.
                Be pitiful, O God!

V.

The plague of gold strikes far and near,
  And deep and strong it enters:
This purple chimar which we wear,
  Makes madder than the centaur's:
Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange,

We cheer the pale gold-diggers—
Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with figures.
Be pitiful, O God!

VI.

The curse of gold upon the land
The lack of bread enforces—
The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
Like more of Death's White horses!
The rich preach 'rights' and future days,
And hear no angel scoffing,—
The poor die mute—with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.
Be pitiful, O God!

VII.

We meet together at the feast—
To private mirth betake us—
We stare down in the winecup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us!
We name delight, and pledge it round—
'It shall be ours to-morrow!'
God's seraphs! do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow?
Be pitiful, O God!

VIII.

We sit together, with the skies,
The stedfast skies, above us,

They Just tho Tell us love Can die

We look into each other's eyes,—
'And how long will you love us?'—
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless—
'Till death us part!'—O words, to be
Our *best* for love the deathless!
Be pitiful, O God!

IX.

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed—
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, 'Be stronger-hearted!'
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely!—
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only!
Be pitiful, O God!

X.

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces:
They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places?—
We cannot speak;—we see anew
The hills we used to live in,
And feel our mother's smile press through
The kisses she is giving.
Be pitiful, O God!

XI.

We pray together at the kirk,
  For mercy, mercy, solely—
Hands weary with the evil work,
  We lift them to the Holy.
The corpse is calm below our knee—
  Its spirit, bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either, we—
  Without the rest or glory!
                Be pitiful, O God!

XII.

We leave the communing of men,
  The murmur of the passions,
And live alone, to live again
  With endless generations.
Are we so brave?—The sea and sky
  In silence lift their mirrors,
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
  Recoil from their own terrors.
                Be pitiful, O God!

XIII.

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
  Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding:
The sun strikes through the farthest mist,
  The city's spire to golden.
The city's golden spire it was,

When hope and health were strongest,
But now it is the churchyard grass
We look upon the longest.
Be pitiful, O God!

XIV.

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
Men whisper, 'He is dying:'
We cry no more 'Be pitiful!'—
We have no strength for crying.
No strength, no need! Then, Soul of mine,
Look up and triumph rather—
Lo! in the depth of God's Divine,
The Son adjures the Father—
BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

A PORTRAIT.

"One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.
  Ten times have the lilies blown,
  Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear—
  Lily-shaped, and drooped in duty
  To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,
  Which a trail of golden hair
  Keeps from fading off to air:

And a forehead fair and saintly,
  Which two blue eyes undershine,
  Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
  Though too calm, you think, and tender,
  For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
  Frank, obedient,—waiting still
  On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,—
  As young birds, or early wheat
  When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
  Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
  Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)
  Which come softly—just as *she*,
  When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
  In a bower of gentle looks,—
  Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
  As a silver stream may run,
  Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
  As if drawn from thoughts more far
  Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
  He would sing of her with falls
  Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
  He would paint her unaware
  With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,
  He would whisper—'You have done a
  Consecrated little Una!'

And a dreamer (did you show him
  That same picture) would exclaim,
  'Tis my angel, with a name!'

And a stranger,—when he sees her
  In the street even—smileth stilly,
  Just as *you* would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
  Soften, sleeken every word,—
  As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
  The hard earth whereon she passes,
  With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, 'God love her!'—
  Ay, and certes, in good sooth,
  We may all be sure HE DOTH.

[illegible] Sun [illegible] colling last
Soul shall [illegible] out the last
[illegible] his being into bounds.
Tennyson.

CONFESSIONS.

I.

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her!
God and she and I only, . . there, I sate down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession. . . Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angels of resurrection shall do it at the last.
'My cup is blood-red
With my sin,' she said,
'And I pour it out to the bitter lees,
As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the last,
Or as thou wert as these!'

II.

When God smote His hands together, and struck out thy soul as a spark
Into the organised glory of things, from deeps of the dark,—

Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou honour
the power in the form,
As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the
little ground-worm?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'For my seed-light shed
Has smouldered away from His first decrees!
The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf praiseth
the worm:
I am viler than these!'

III.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample
thee straight
With His wild rains beating and drenching thy light
found inadequate;
When He only sent thee the north-winds, a little search-
ing and chill,
To quicken thy flame . . didst thou kindle and flash to
the heights of His will?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'Unquickened, unspread
My fire dropt down, and I wept on my knees!
I only said of His winds of the north as I shrank from
their chill, . .
What delight is in these?'

IV.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet it as
such,

But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened the
world to thy touch,
At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable to
prove it afar,
Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving it
out like a star?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'And not merited
The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!
The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-side praiseth
the star:—
I am viler than these.'

V.

Then I cried aloud in my passion, . . unthankful and
impotent creature,
To throw up thy scorn unto God through the rents in
thy nature!
If He, the all-giving and loving, is served so, what
then
Hast thou done to the weak and the changing, . . thy
fellows of men?
'I have *loved*,' she said,
(Words bowing her head
As the wind bows the wet acacia-trees!)
'I saw God sitting above me,—but I . . I sate among
men,
And I have loved these.'

VI.

Again with a lifted voice, . . like a trumpet that takes
The low note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing breaks
On the air with it solemn and clear . . 'I have sinned not in this!
Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have loved not amiss.
Let the living,' she said,
'Enquire of the Dead,
In the house of the pale-fronted Images,—
And my own true Dead will answer for me, that I have not loved amiss
In my love for all these.

VII.

'The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep day and night;
Their least step on the stair, still throbs through me, if ever so light:
Their least gift, which they left to my childhood in long ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and gazed at through tears.
Dig the snow,' she said,
'For my churchyard bed,
Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
If one only of these my beloveds shall love me with heart-warm tears,
As I have loved these!

VIII.

'If I angered any among them, my own life was sore;
If I fell from their presence, I clung to their memory more:
Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes called sweet;
And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down straight at their feet.
I have loved,' she said,—
'Man is weak, God is dread,
Yet the weakest man dies with his spirit at ease,
Having poured such an oil of love but once on the Saviour's feet,
As I lavished on these.'

IX.

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the Human, and left the Divine!
Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their wild berry-wine?
Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers approached thee with blame,
Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved thee the same?
But she shrunk and said,
'God, over my head,
Will sweep in the wrath of His judgment seas,
If indeed he shall deal with me sinning, but only the same
And not gentler than these!'

LOVED ONCE.

I.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds,—the welladay,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure despair,
Than these words—'I loved ONCE.'

II.

And who saith, 'I loved ONCE?'
Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love, foresee,
Love through eternity,
And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
Not God, called LOVE, his noble crown-name,—casting
A light too broad for blasting!
The great God changing not from everlasting,
Saith never, 'I loved ONCE.'

III.

Oh, never the 'Loved ONCE'
Dost THOU say, Victim-Christ, misprized friend!
The cross and curse might rend,
But having loved Thou lovest to the end!
This is man's saying—man's. Too weak to move
One sphered star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
With his No More, and Once.

IV.

How say ye, 'We loved once,'
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold enow,
Mourners, without that snow?
Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each other so?
And could ye say of some whose love is known,
Whose prayers have met your own,
Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone,
Such words, 'We loved them ONCE?'

V.

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
Say calm of *me*, sweet friends, when out of sight?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy light?
Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me, decayed?
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

VI.

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
Say cold of me when further put away
In earth's sepulchral clay?
When mute the lips which deprecate to-day?—
Not so! not then—*least* then! When Life is shriven,
And Death's full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in Heaven,
Say not, 'We loved them once.'

VII.

Say never, ye loved ONCE!
God is too near above, the grave, below,
And all our moments go
Too quickly past our souls, for saying so.
The mysteries of Life and Death avenge
Affections light of range—
There comes no change to justify that change,
Whatever comes—Loved ONCE!

VIII.

And yet that same word ONCE
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said
Shaking a discrowned head,
'We ruled once,'—dotards, 'We once taught and led,'—
Cripples once danced i' the vines—and bards approved,
Were once by scornings, moved:
But love strikes one hour—LOVE. Those *never* loved,
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
  For my thoughts to live in,
When for earth too fancy-loose,
  And too low for Heaven!
Hush! I talk my dream aloud—
  I build it bright to see,—
I build it on the moonlit cloud
  To which I looked with *thee*.

II.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
  Faced with amber column,—
Crowned with crimson cupola
  From a sunset solemn!
May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
  Pale and glimmering,
With a sunbeam hid in each,
  And a smell of spring.

III.

Build the entrance high and proud,
  Darkening and then brightening,
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
  Veined by the lightning;
Use one with an iris-stain
  For the door within,
Turning to a sound like rain
  As I enter in.

IV.

Build a spacious hall thereby;
  Boldly, never fearing,
Use the blue place of the sky
  Which the wind is clearing,—
Branched with corridors sublime,
  Fleckéd with winding stairs—
Such as children wish to climb,
  Following their own prayers.

V.

In the mutest of the house,
  I will have my chamber:
Silence at the door shall use
  Evening's light of amber,
Solemnising every mood,
  Softening in degree,—
Turning sadness into good,
  As I turn the key.

VI.

Be my chamber tapestried
  With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless,—glorified
  When the sunbeams come here;
Wandering harpers, harping on
  Waters stringed for such,—
Drawing colours, for a tune,
  With a vibrant touch.

VII.

Bring a shadow green and still
  From the chesnut forest,
Bring a purple from the hill,
  When the heat is sorest;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
  Carpet-wove around,—
Whereupon the foot shall fall
  In light instead of sound.

VIII.

Bring the fantasque cloudlets home
  From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the room,—
  Named as Fancy weeneth;
Some be Junos, without eyes;
  Naiads, without sources;
Some be birds of paradise,
  Some, Olympian horses.

IX.

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
  Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
  From the lilies' edges:
From our England's field and moor,
  Bring them calm and white in,
Whence to form a mirror pure
  For Love's self-delighting.

X.

Bring a grey cloud from the east
  Where the lark is singing,
Something of the song at least
  Unlost in the bringing;
That shall be a morning chair
  Poet-dream may sit in,
When it leans out on the air,
  Unrhymed and unwritten.

XI.

Bring the red cloud from the sun!
  While he sinketh, catch it;
That shall be a couch,—with one
  Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for poet's finest Thought,
  At the curfew-sounding,—
Things unseen being nearer brought
  Than the seen, around him.

XII.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh!
  'Las, they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly,
  As in April weather!
Cupola and column proud,
  Structure bright to see—
Gone! except that moonlit cloud
  To which I looked with *thee!*

XIII.

Let them! Wipe such visionings
  From the Fancy's cartel—
Love secures some fairer things
  Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken,—heaven be bowed—
  But still, unchanged shall be,—
Here in my soul,—that moonlit cloud,
  To which I looked with THEE!

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

I.

THE ship went on with solemn face:
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward.
I bowed down weary in the place,
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

II.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me,
And kept my inner self apart
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
Made conscious of a human heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight!
The waters round me, turbulent,
The skies impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
As glorified by even the intent
Of holding the day-glory!

IV.

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic:
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic;

V.

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.—
The sun!—he came up to be viewed,
And sky and sea made mighty room
To inaugurate the vision!

VI.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,
As red wine, through the hills, and break
Through many a mist's inurning;
But, here, no earth profaned the sun!
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

VII.

Away with joys fantastical!
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded if self-doubted.
Though here no earthly shadows fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

VIII.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves;
I would not praise the pageant high
And miss the dedicature!
I, drawn down toward the sunless graves
By force of natural things,—should I
Exult in only nature?

IX.

I could not bear to sit alone
In nature's fixed benignities
While my warm pulse was moving.
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
To satisfy the loving.

X.

It seems a better lot than so,
To sit with friends beneath the beech,
And call them dear and dearer;
Or follow children as they go
In pretty pairs, with softened speech
As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI.

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day.
The sea sings round me while ye roll
Afar the hymn unaltered,
And kneel, where once I knelt, to pray
And bless me deeper in the soul,
Because the voice has faltered.

XII.

And though this sabbath comes to me
Without the stolèd minister
And chanting congregation,
God's spirit shall give comfort, HE
Who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation.

XIII.

He shall assist me to look higher,
Where keep the saints, with harp and song,
An endless sabbath morning,
And on that sea commixed with fire
Oft drop their eyelids raised too long
To the full Godhead's burning.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

I.

My lonely chamber next the sea,
Is full of many flowers set free
  By summer's earliest duty;
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk,
  To pull the least in beauty.

II.

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
That learnt by gazing on the sun
  To counterfeit his shining—
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven, has won anew
  A glory . . . in declining

III.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
  The nightingale's being over;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
  Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV.

Deep violets you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
  Without a thought disloyal;
And cactuses, a queen might don
If weary of a golden crown,
  And still appear as royal.

V.

Pansies for ladies all! I wis
That none who wear such brooches, miss
  A jewel in the mirror;
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
  Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI.

Love's language may be talked with these:
To work out choicest sentences,
  No blossoms can be meeter,—
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
  Or meanings be the sweeter.

VII.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
  Their longer bloom decreeing,—
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
  Too earnestly—for seeing.

VIII.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there, may have
  A type that seemeth worthy
Of a fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
  Then perished as the earthy.

IX.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
  Their rainbow colours viewing,
May feel them,—with a silent start,—
The covenant, his childish heart
  With nature made,—renewing.

X.

No flowers our gardened England hath,
To match with these in bloom and breath,
  Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
  The elements presiding.

XI.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
  With prodigal rewarding,
For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
  To light her through the garden.

XII.

But, here, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
  Before the priestly moonshine,
And every Wind with stolèd feet
In wandering down the alleys sweet
  Steps lightly on the sunshine,

XIII.

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses that
  No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound,
He dares not use upon such ground,
  To ever-trickling waters.

XIV.

Yet, sun and wind! what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly show
  In posies newly gathered?—
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,—
  A little flower half-withered.

XV.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
  Look greener where it reddened;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
  Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

XVI.

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
  Among the city shadows:
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
  Of nature in the meadows.

XVII.

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
  In pale refraction driven!
How sadly, plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
  The first sweet news of Heaven!

XVIII.

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
  And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
  And garden-blooms, to look on.

XIX.

But SHE, for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
  Receiving what was given,—
Oh! if her face she turnèd then, . . .
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
  Upon the flowers of Devon!

XX.

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies—warm oracles
  For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
Beloved friends, to mine supplies
  A beauty worthier singing!

THE MASK.

I.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
  I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head
  And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

II.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
  And Wrong did teach this jesting bold;
These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
  While a death-chime was tolled—
And what now will you say?—she said.

III.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
  Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Are captives so uncomforted,
  As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV.

I know my face is bright, she said,—
  Such brightness, dying suns diffuse!
I bear upon my forehead shed
  The sign of what I lose,—
The ending of my day, she said.

V.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
  And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
  And let my tears run smooth,—
It were the happier way, she said.

VI.

And since that must not be, she said,
  I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,
  Who do not, therefore, grieve!
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII.

But in your bitter world, she said,
  Face-joy's a costly mask to wear,
And bought with pangs long nourishèd
  And rounded to despair.
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

VIII.

Ye weep for those who weep?—she said—
  Ah fools!—I bid you pass them by!
Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled,
  What time their eyes were dry!
Whom sadder can I say?—she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART.

I.

FREE Heart, that singest to-day,
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world,
Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
To follow, perhaps, thy way?
Where the tamer, thine own will bind,
And, to make thee sing, will blind,
While the little hip grows for the free behind?
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Free hearts are better so.'

II.

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand.
The world goes riding it fair and grand,
While the truth is bought and sold!

World-voices east, world-voices west,
They call thee, Heart, from thine early rest,
'Come hither, come hither and be our guest.'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Good hearts are calmer so.'

III.

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's Strife,
With a golden heft to his knife:
World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine
Her blood-red plans of life:
World's Gain, with a brow knit down:
World's Fame, with a laurel crown,
Which rustles most as the leaves turn brown—
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Calm hearts are wiser so.'

IV.

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away,
To partake the dark king's seat,—
And that the tears ran fast on her feet
To think how the sun shone yesterday?
With her ankles sunken in asphodel
She wept for the roses of earth which fell

From her lap when the wild car drave to hell.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Wise hearts are warmer so.'

V.

And what is this place not seen,
Where Hearts may hide serene?
'Tis a fair still house well-kept,
Which humble thoughts have swept,
And holy prayers made clean.
There, I sit with Love in the sun,
And we two never have done
Singing sweeter songs than are guessed by *one*.'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Warm hearts are fuller so.'

VI.

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
That Love may be kept too near.
Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
How Love may be false and frail
To a heart once holden dear?
—'But this true Love of mine
Clings fast as the clinging vine,
And mingles pure as the grapes in wine.'
—Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Full hearts beat higher so.'

VII.

O Heart, O Love, beware!—
Look up, and boast not there.
For who has twirled at the pin?
'Tis the world, between Death and Sin,—
The world, and the world's Despair!
And Death has quickened his pace
To the hearth, with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love, in Love's own place—
Heart, wilt thou go?
'Still, no!
High hearts must grieve even so.'

VIII.

The house is waste to-day,—
The leaf has dropt from the spray,
The thorn, prickt through to the song:
If summer doeth no wrong
The winter will, they say.
Sing, Heart! what heart replies?
In vain we were calm and wise,
If the tears unkissed stand on in our eyes.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'Ah, no!
Grieved hearts must break even so.'

IX.

Howbeit all is not lost:
The warm noon ends in frost,

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I.

If I were thou, O butterfly,
And poised my purple wings to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and die,—

II.

I would not waste my strength on those,
As thou,—for summer hath a close,
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III.

If I were thou, O working bee,
And all that honey-gold I see
Could delve from roses easily,

IV.

I would not hive it at man's door,
As thou,—that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich, and leave me poor.

V.

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the cloud,

VI.

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone,
Which the next storm may trample down.

VII.

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof, and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII.

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

IX.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut up window heard,
Like Love's sweet Yes too long deferred,

X.

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow whose pride did fade
As thus, methought, an angel said;

XII.

'If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

XIII.

'I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV.

'I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*,—half way 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above, and judge within.

XV.

'I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—toward fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

XVI.

'I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,—
But take God's freedom, using it.

XVII.

'I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII.

'Then sing, O singer!—but allow
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou!'

MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

Back-looking Memory
And prophet Hope both sprang from out the ground;
One, where the flashing of Cherubic sword
Fell sad, in Eden's ward,—
And one, from Eden earth, within the sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
What time the promise after curse was said—
'Thy seed shall bruise his head.'

II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming atmosphere
When she was born. Her deep eyes shine and shone
With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wanner paleness year by year:
With odorous gums, she mixeth things defiled;
She trampleth down earth's grasses green and sweet,
With her far-wandering feet.

III.

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness killing;
She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round;
She droppeth tears with seed where man is tilling
The rugged soil in his exhausted hours;
She smileth—ah me! in her smile doth go
A mood of deeper woe!

IV.

Hope tripped on out of sight
Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw not fade,
And went a-nodding through the wilderness
With brow that shone no less
Than sea-bird wings, by storm more frequent made,—
Searching the treeless rock for fruits of light;
Her fair quick feet being armed from stones and cold,
By slippers of pure gold.

V.

Memory did Hope much wrong,
And, while she dreamed, her slippers stole away;
But still she wended on with mirth unheeding,
The while her feet were bleeding,
Till Memory met her on a certain day,
And with most evil eyes did search her long
And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground
In a stark deadly swound.

VI.

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that THOU wert standing near,
Oh Thou, who saidest 'live' to creatures lying
In their own blood, and dying!
For Thou her forehead to thine heart didst rear
And make its silent pulses sing again,—
Pouring a new light o'er her darkened eyne,
With tender tears from Thine!

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swound and gazed upon Thy face,
And, meeting there that soft subduing look
Which Peter's spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture to embrace
Thy pierced hands and feet with kisses close,
And prayed Thee to assist her evermore
To 'reach the things before.'

VIII.

Then gavest Thou the smile
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like summer lightning,
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where she never
From Love and Faith may sever,—
Whereat the Eden crown she saw not whitening
A time ago, though whitening all the while,
Reddened with life, to hear the Voice which talked
To Adam as he walked.

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY.

I.

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
  We build the house where we may rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly,
We look up to the great wide sky,
Enquiring wherefore we were born . . .
  For earnest, or for jest?

II.

The senses folding thick and dark
  About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond;
We strike out blindly to a mark
  Believed in, but not seen.

III.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
  Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat!
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
  Expands from world to world.

IV.

And, in the tumult and excess
  Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
  Through all things that are done.

V.

God keeps his holy mysteries
  Just on the outside of man's dream!
In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His eyes,
  Like swans adown a stream.

VI.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
  Of His great beauty?—exaltations
From His great glory?—strong previsions
Of what we shall be?—intuitions
Of what we are—in calms and storms,
  Beyond our peace and passions?

VII.

Things nameless! which, in passing so,
  Do stroke us with a subtle grace.
We say, 'Who passes?'—they are dumb;
We cannot see them go or come;
Their touches fall soft—cold—as snow
  Upon a blind man's face.

VIII.

Yet, touching so, they draw above
  Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown,—
Our daily joy and pain, advance
To a divine significance,—
Our human love—O mortal love,
  That light is not its own!

IX.

And, sometimes, horror chills our blood
  To be so near such mystic Things,
And we wrap round us, for defence,
Our purple manners, moods of sense—
As angels, from the face of God,
  Stand hidden in their wings.

X.

And, sometimes, through Life's heavy swound
  We grope for them!—with strangled breath
We stretch our hands abroad and try
To reach them in our agony,—
And widen, so, the broad life-wound
  Which soon is large enough for death.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

I.

THEY say that God lives very high!
  But if you look above the pines
You cannot see our God. And why?

II.

And if you dig down in the mines
  You never see Him in the gold,
Though, from Him, all that's glory shines.

III.

God is so good, He wears a fold
  Of heaven and earth across his face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV.

But still I feel that His embrace
  Slides down by thrills through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place;

V.

As if my tender mother laid
  On my shut lids, her kisses' pressure,
Half-waking me at night, and said
  'Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?'

THE CLAIM.

I.

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed one day:
(Sighing is all her rest!)
'Wellaway, wellaway, ah, wellaway!'
As ocean beat the stone, did she her breast. . .
'Ah, wellaway! . . ah me! alas, ah me!'
Such sighing uttered she.

II.

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as rain
That falls on water,—'Lo,
The Winds have wandered from me! I remain
Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go
To lean my whiteness on the mountain blue
Till wanted for more dew.

III.

'The Sun has struck my brain to weary peace,
Whereby constrained and pale
I spin for him a larger golden fleece
Than Jason's, yearning for as full a sail!
Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed to thy mind,
Give me a sigh for wind,

IV.

And let it carry me adown the west!'
    But Love, who, prostrated,
Lay at Grief's foot, . . his lifted eyes possessed
Of her full image, . . answered in her stead;
'Now nay, now nay! she shall not give away
What is my wealth, for any Cloud that flieth.
    Where Grief makes moan,
    Love claims his own!
And therefore do I lie here night and day,
And eke my life out with the breath she sigheth.'

LIFE AND LOVE.

I.

FAST this Life of mine was dying,
  Blind already and calm as death,
Snowflakes on her bosom lying
  Scarcely heaving with the breath.

II.

Love came by, and, having known her
  In a dream of fabled lands,
Gently stooped, and laid upon her
  Mystic chrism of holy hands;

III.

Drew his smile across her folded
  Eyelids, as the swallow dips, . . .
Breathed as finely as the cold did,
  Through the locking of her lips.

IV.

So, when Life looked upward, being
  Warmed and breathed on from above,
What sight could she have for seeing,
  Evermore . . . but only LOVE?

INCLUSIONS.

I.

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in thine?
As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie and pine!
Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, . . unfit to plight with thine.

II.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to thine own?
My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear run down.
Now leave a little space, Dear, . . lest it should wet thine own.

III.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled with thy soul?—
Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand, . . the part is in the whole! . .
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate when soul is joined to soul.

INSUFFICIENCY.

I.

THERE is no one beside thee, and no one above thee;
Thou standest alone, as the nightingale sings!
And my words that would praise thee, are impotent things,
For none can express thee, though all should approve thee!
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can love thee.

II.

Say, what can I do for thee? . . weary thee . . grieve thee?
Lean on thy shoulder . . . new burdens to add? . .
Weep my tears over thee . . making thee sad?
Oh, hold me not—love me not! let me retrieve thee!
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can leave thee.

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

If Zeus chose us a King of the flowers in his mirth,
  He would call to the rose and would royally crown it,
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the grace of the earth,
  Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it!
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye of the flowers,
  Is the blush of the meadows that feel themselves fair,—
Is the lightning of beauty, that strikes through the bowers
  On pale lovers who sit in the glow unaware.
Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the rose lifts the cup
  To the red lips of Cypris invoked for a guest!
Ho, the rose having curled its sweet leaves for the world
  Takes delight in the motion its petals keep up,
As they laugh to the Wind as it laughs from the west.

From Achilles Tatius.

A DEAD ROSE.

I.

O ROSE! who dares to name thee?
No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor sweet,
But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer—thy titles shame thee.

II.

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedge-row thorns, and take away
An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now,—unsweetened would forego thee.

III.

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn
Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—
If shining now,—with not a hue would light thee.

IV.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined, because
It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—
If dropping now,—would darken where it met thee.

V.

The fly that lit upon thee,
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—
If lighting now,—would coldly overrun thee.

VI.

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
If passing now,—would blindly overlook thee.

VII.

The heart doth recognise thee,
Alone, alone! the heart doth smell thee sweet,
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete—
Though seeing all those changes that disguise thee.

VIII.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose! than to such roses bold
As Julia wears at dances, smiling cold!——
Lie still upon this heart—which breaks below thee!

THE EXILE'S RETURN.

I.

When from thee, weeping, I removed,
And from my land for years,
I thought not to return, Beloved,
With those same parting tears.
I come again to hill and lea,
Weeping for thee.

II.

I clasped thine hand when standing last
Upon the shore in sight.
The land is green, the ship is fast,
I shall be there to-night!
I shall be there—no longer *we*—
No more with thee.

III.

Had I beheld thee dead and still,
I might more clearly know,
How heart of thine could turn as chill
As hearts by nature so;
How change could touch the falsehood-free
And changeless *thee!*

IV.

But, now thy tender looks last-seen
  Within my soul remain,
'Tis hard to think that *they* have been, . .
  To be no more again—
That I shall vainly wait—ah me!
  A word from thee.

V.

I could not bear to look upon
  That mound of funeral clay,
Where one sweet voice is silence,—one
  Æthereal brow decay,
Where all thy mortal I might see,
  But never thee.

VI.

For thou art where all friends are gone,
  Whose parting pain is o'er;
And I, who love and weep alone,
  Where thou wilt weep no more,
Weep bitterly and selfishly,
  For *me*, not *thee*.

VII.

I know, Beloved, thou canst not know
  That I endure this pain!
For saints in Heaven, the Scriptures show,
  Can never grieve again—
And grief, once known for mine, would be
  Still shared by thee!

THE SLEEP.

"He giveth His beloved sleep."—*Psalm* cxxvii. 2.

I.

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
'He giveth His beloved, sleep?'

II.

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
The patriot's voice, to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown, to light the brows?—
'He giveth *His* beloved, sleep.'

III.

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake.
'He giveth *His* beloved, sleep.'

IV.

'Sleep soft, beloved!' we sometimes say,
But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep;
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
'He giveth *His* beloved, sleep.'

V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!
O delvéd gold, the wailers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And 'giveth His beloved, sleep.'

VI.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still
Though on its slope men sow and reap.
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
'He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

VII.

Yea, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man
Confirmed in such a rest to keep,
But angels say—and through the word
I think their happy smile is *heard*—
'He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the jugglers leap,—
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on *His* love repose,
Who 'giveth His beloved, sleep!'

IX.

And, friends, dear friends,—when it shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let one, most loving of you all,
Say, 'Not a tear must o'er her fall—
He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

THE MEASURE.

—♦—

"He comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure (שלש)."
Isaiah xl.

"Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure (שלש)."*
Psalm lxxx.

I.

God, the Creator, with a pulseless hand
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man, in one
Measure and by one weight;—
So saith His holy book.

II.

Shall *we*, then, who have issued from the dust,
And there return,—shall *we*, who toil for dust,
And wrap our winnings in this dusty life,
Say, 'No more tears, Lord God!
The measure runneth o'er?'

* I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

III.

Oh, holder of the balance, laughest Thou?
Nay, Lord! be gentler to our foolishness,
For His sake who assumed our dust, and turns
On thee pathetic eyes
Still moistened with our tears!

IV.

And teach us, O our Father, while we weep,
To look in patience upon earth and learn—
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at last
These tearful eyes be filled
With the dry dust of death.

COWPER'S GRAVE.

I.

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's decaying,—
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying:
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low as silence, languish!
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her anguish.

II.

O poets! from a maniac's tongue, was poured the deathless singing!
O Christians! at your cross of hope, a hopeless hand was clinging!
O men! this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye were smiling!

III.

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears his story,
How discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory,
And how, when one by one, sweet sounds and wandering lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted;

IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken.

V.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven hath won him—
Who suffered once the madness-cloud, to His own love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could find him,

VI.

And wrought within his shattered brain, such quick poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences!
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber.

VII.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses:
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became beside him, true and loving.

VIII.

But while, in blindness he remained unconscious of the guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of providing,
He testified this solemn truth though phrenzy desolated—
Nor man nor nature satisfy, whom only God created!

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she
blesses
And drops upon his burning brow, the coolness of her
kisses;
That turns his fevered eyes around—'My mother!
where's my mother?'—
As if such tender words and looks could come from any
other!—

X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending
o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unweary love
she bore him!—
Thus, woke the poet from the dream his life's long
fever gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes, which closed in
death to save him!

XI.

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth could image that
awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round
him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body
parted,
But felt *those eyes alone*, and knew '*My* Saviour! *not*
deserted!'

XII.

Deserted! who hath dreamt that when the cross in darkness rested
Upon the Victim's hidden face no love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops averted?
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one* should be deserted?

XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather,
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and Father;
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry his universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken!'

XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid his lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation,
That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a vision!

SOUNDS.

Ηκουσας η ουκ ηκουσας;——
ÆSCHYLUS.

I.

HARKEN, harken!
The rapid river carrieth
Many noises underneath
The hoary ocean;
Teaching his solemnity,
Sounds of inland life and glee,
Learnt beside the waving tree
When the winds in summer prank
Toss the shades from bank to bank,
And the quick rains, in emotion
Which rather glads the earth than grieves,
Count and visibly rehearse
The pulses of the universe
Upon the summer leaves—
Learnt among the lilies straight,
When they bow them to the weight
Of many bees whose hidden hum
Seemeth from themselves to come—

Learnt among the grasses green,
Where the rustling mice are seen
By the gleaming, as they run,
Of their quick eyes in the sun,
And lazy sheep are browzing through,
With their noses trailed in dew;
And the squirrel leaps adown,
Holding fast the filbert brown;
And the lark, with more of mirth
In his song than suits the earth,
Droppeth some in soaring high,
To pour the rest out in the sky;
While the woodland doves, apart
In the copse's leafy heart,
Solitary not ascetic,
Hidden and yet vocal, seem
Joining, in a lovely psalm,
Man's despondence, nature's calm,
Half mystical and half pathetic,
Like a sighing in a dream.*
All these sounds the river telleth,

* "While floating up bright forms ideal,
Mistress, or friend, around me stream;
Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
Like music mingling with a dream."

John Kenyon.

I do not doubt that the "music" of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own "dream," and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas, however, being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many.

Softened to an undertone
Which ever and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,
  In the ocean's ear.
Ay! and ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

II.

  Harken, harken!
The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way;
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing bride,
While, shaking the tower of the ancient church,
The marriage bells do swing;
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits, with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering,
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear, at the self-same time,
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in the summer air,—
Save when he droppeth his voice adown,
To dream of the amaranthine crown

His mortal brows shall wear;
And a baby cries with a feeble sound
'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found;
And an old man groans,—with his testament
Only half-signed,—for the life that's spent;
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, 'for aye, for aye!'
And foemen twain, while Earth, their mother,
Looks greenly upward, curse each other.
A school-boy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks;
A lonely student cries aloud,
Eureka! clasping at his shroud;
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering;
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting stone;
A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail;
A gossip coughs in her thrice told tale;
A muttering gamester shakes the dice;
A reaper foretells goodluck from the skies;
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them;
A patriot leaving his native land to them,
Cries to the world against perjured state;
A priest disserts upon linen skirts;
A sinner screams for one hope more;
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor;
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living

Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear;
And *he* who on that narrow bier
Has room enough, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound.

III.

Harken, harken!
God speaketh to thy soul;
Using the sùpreme voice which doth confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
All senses into one,—
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John,
For whom did backward roll
The cloud-gate of the future, turned to *see*
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now—
Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
Through the moan of the creature's desolation,
Striking, and in its stroke, resembling
The memory of a solemn vow,
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
The cup, with a sudden trembling.

IV.

Harken, harken!
God speaketh in thy soul;
Saying, 'O thou, that movest
With feeble steps across this earth of mine,

To break beside the fount thy golden bowl
  And spill its purple wine,—
Look up to heaven and see how like a scroll,
My right hand hath thine immortality
In an eternal grasping! Thou, that lovest
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
And also what change mars and tombs pollute—
I am the end of love!—give love to *me!*
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound
Than all thy sin! sit still beneath my rood,
And count the droppings of my victim-blood,
    And seek none other sound!'

V.

    Harken, harken!
  Shall we hear the lapsing river
  And our brother's sighing, ever,
    And not the voice of God?

THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

WHICH is the weakest thing of all
  Mine heart can ponder?
The sun, a little cloud can pall
  With darkness yonder?
The cloud, a little wind can move
  Where'er it listeth?
The wind, a little leaf above,
  Though sere, resisteth?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was green,
  My days were gladder;
But now, whatever Spring may mean,
  I must grow sadder.
Ah me! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
  My lips asunder—
Then is mine heart the weakest thing
  Itself can ponder.

III.

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are pined
  And drop together,
And at a blast which is not wind,
  The forests wither,
Thou, from the darkening deathly curse,
  To glory breakest,—
The Strongest of the universe
  Guarding the weakest!

THE PET-NAME.

——— the name
Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.
MISS MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes.*

I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,
Uncadenced for the ear,
Unhonoured by ancestral claim,
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
The solemn font anear.

II.

It never did, to pages wove
For gay romance, belong;
It never dedicate did move
As 'Sacharissa,' unto love—
'Orinda,' unto song.

III.

Though I write books it will be read
Upon the leaves of none,
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral stone.

IV.

This name whoever chance to call
  Perhaps your smile may win—
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes and feel withal
  The sudden tears within.

V.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
  Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
  If lasting till they come?

VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
  But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same?
And so to me my very name
  Assumes a mournful sound.

VII.

My brother gave that name to me
  When we were children twain,—
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
  That life had any pain.

VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one
  Of chesnuts from the hill—
And through the word our laugh did run
As part thereof! The mirth being done,
  He calls me by it still.

IX.

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
  What none of you can hear!
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
  Around, our human cheer.

X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
  My sisters' woodland glee,—
My father's praise, I did not miss,
When stooping down he cared to kiss
  The poet at his knee,—

XI.

And voices, which to name me, aye
  Their tenderest tones were keeping!—
To some I never more can say
An answer, till God wipes away
  In heaven these drops of weeping.

XII.

My name to me a sadness wears;
  No murmurs cross my mind:
Now God be thanked for these thick tears,
Which show, of those departed years,
  Sweet memories left behind!

XIII.

Now God be thanked for years enwrought
  With love which softens yet!
Now God be thanked for every thought
Which is so tender it hath caught
  Earth's guerdon of regret!

XIV.

The earth may sadden, not remove,
  Our love divinely given;
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
  And lead us nearer Heaven.

THE MOURNING MOTHER

(OF THE DEAD BLIND).

I.

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
  For thy blind boy in grave?
That no more with each other,
  Sweet counsel ye can have?—
That *he*, left dark by nature,
  Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
  Along smooth paths instead?
That thou canst no more show him
  The sunshine, by the heat;
The river's silver flowing,
  By murmurs at his feet?
The foliage, by its coolness;
  The roses, by their smell;
And all creation's fulness,
  By Love's invisible?
Weepest thou to behold not
  His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
  And prayed against in vain—

And under which, sate smiling
  The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
  The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
  His clinging hand on thine—
Which now, at dream-time, will not
  Its cold touch disentwine?
And weepest thou still ofter,
  Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
  By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

II.

But since to him when living,
  Thou wert both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
  From a high sphere alone!
Sustain that exaltation—
  Expand that tender light,
And hold in mother-passion,
  Thy Blessed, in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
  From the dark world he knew,—
No twilight in the gateway
  To mediate 'twixt the two,—
Into the sudden glory,
  Out of the dark he trod,

Departing from before thee
  At once to light and God !—
For the first face, beholding
  The Christ's in its divine,—
For the first place, the golden
  And tideless hyaline;
With trees, at lasting summer,
  That rock to songful sound,
While angels, the new-comer,
  Wrap a still smile around.
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
  His happy voice he tries,—
Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
  Than others, o'er his eyes,—
Yet still, in all the singing,
  Thinks haply of thy song
Which, in his life's first springing,
  Sang to him all night long,
And wishes it beside him,
  With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,—
  To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mourning mother,
  Thy blind boy walks in light!
Ye wait for one another,
  Before God's infinite!
But *thou* art now the darkest,
  Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,

Content that it be so,—
Until ye two give meeting
Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
As once thou leddest *his!*
Wait on, thou mourning mother.

A VALEDICTION.

I.

God be with thee my beloved,—God be with thee!
Else alone thou goest forth,
Thy face unto the north,—
Moor and pleasance, all around thee and beneath thee,
Looking equal in one snow;
While I who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow,
With the farewell and the hollo,
And cannot reach thee so:
Alas! I can but teach thee!
God be with thee my beloved,—God be with thee!

II.

Can I teach thee my beloved,—can I teach thee?
If I said, Go left or right,
The counsel would be light,
The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee.
My right would show like left;

My raising would depress thee,—
My choice of light would blind thee,—
Of way, would leave behind thee,—
Of end, would leave bereft.
Alas! I can but bless thee!
May God teach thee my beloved,—may God teach thee!

III.

Can I bless thee my beloved,—can I bless thee?
What blessing word can I,
From mine own tears, keep dry?
What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee?
My good reverts to ill;
My calmnesses would move thee,—
My softnesses would prick thee,—
My bindings up would break thee,—
My crownings, curse and kill.
Alas! I can but love thee!
May God bless thee my beloved,—may God bless thee!

IV.

Can I love thee my beloved,—can I love thee?
And is *this* like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would watch above thee?
My love-kiss can deny

No tear that falls beneath it;
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee,—
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And *I*—I can but die!
May God love thee my beloved,—may God love thee!

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart."
LOWELL.

I.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever-golden,
Cankered not the whole year long!
Do ye teach us to be strong
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow?

II.

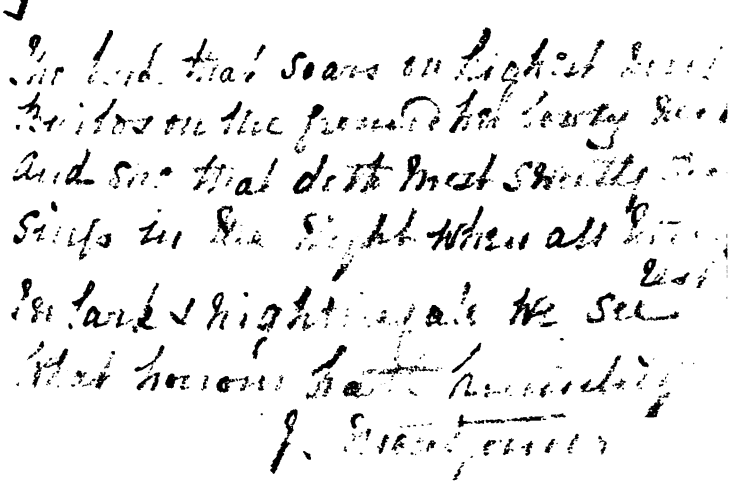
Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms!
Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still!

III.

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?
Ye, who live on mountain peak
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek!

IV.

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new!
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks—O world! they are not tears,
but dew.



BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

THE LADY'S YES.

—♦—

'Yes,' I answered you last night,
  'No,' this morning, Sir, I say.
Colours seen by candle-light,
  Will not look the same by day.

When the viols played their best,
  Lamps above, and laughs below—
Love me sounded like a jest,
  Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No*.

Call me false or call me free—
  Vow, whatever light may shine,
No man on your face shall see
  Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both—
  Time to dance is not to woo—
Wooer light makes fickle troth,
  Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

Learn to win a lady's faith
  Nobly, as the thing is high;
Bravely, as for life and death—
  With a loyal gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
  Point her to the starry skies,
Guard her, by your truthful words,
  Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true—
  Ever true, as wives of yore—
And her *Yes*, once said to you,
  SHALL be Yes for evermore.

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.

I.

SHE has laughed as softly as if she sighed;
  She has counted six and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well tried—
  Oh, each a worthy lover!
They 'give her time,' for her soul must slip
  Where the world has set the grooving;
She will lie to none with her fair red lip—
  But love seeks truer loving.

II.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
  As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
With a glance for *one*, and a glance for *some*,
  From her eyelids rising and falling;
—Speaks common words with a blushful air,
  —Hears bold words, unreproving;
But her silence says—what she never will swear—
  And love seeks better loving.

III.

Go, lady! lean to the night-guitar,
  And drop a smile to the bringer;
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
  At the voice of an in-door singer!
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;
  Glance lightly, on their removing;
And join new vows to old perjuries—
  But dare not call it loving!

IV.

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
  No other is soft in the rhythm;
Unless you can feel, when left by One,
  That all men beside go with him;
Unless you can know, when unpraised by his breath,
  That your beauty itself wants proving;
Unless you can swear—'For life, for death!'—
  Oh, fear to call it loving!

V.

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
  On the absent face that fixed you;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
  With the breadth of heaven betwixt you;
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
  Through behoving and unbehoving;
Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—
  Oh, never call it loving!

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

I.

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,
  Feeling, thinking, seeing,—
Love me in the lightest part,
  Love me in full being.

II.

Love me with thine open youth
  In its frank surrender;
With the vowing of thy mouth,
  With its silence tender.

III.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
  Made for earnest granting!
Taking colour from the skies,
  Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

IV.

Love me with their lids, that fall
  Snow-like at first meeting:
Love me with thine heart, that all
  The neighbours then see beating.

V.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
  Freely—open-minded;
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
  Hearing one behind it.

VI.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
  Sudden faint above me;
Love me with thy blush that burns
  When I murmur *Love me!*

VII.

Love me with thy thinking soul—
  Break it to love-sighing;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
  On through living—dying.

VIII.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
  When the world has crowned thee!
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
  With the angels round thee.

IX.

Love me pure, as musers do,
  Up the woodlands shady:
Love me gaily, fast, and true,
  As a winsome lady.

X.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
  Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,—
  And for something higher.

XI.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
  Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half-a-year—
  As a man is able.

A YEAR'S SPINNING.

—✦—

I.

He listened at the porch that day
  To hear the wheel go on, and on,
And then it stopped—ran back away—
  While through the door he brought the sun:
  But now my spinning is all done.

II.

He sate beside me, with an oath
  That love ne'er ended, once begun;
I smiled—believing for us both,
  What was the truth for only one.
  And now my spinning is all done.

III.

My mother cursed me that I heard
  A young man's wooing as I spun.
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,
  For I have, since, a harder known!
  And now my spinning is all done.

IV.

I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry
Both voices to my ear would drown:
I listened in mine agony—
It was the *silence*, made me groan!
And now my spinning is all done.

V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
Who cursed me on her death-bed lone,
And my dead baby's—(God it save!)
Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
And now my spinning is all done.

VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone!
Sweet neighbours! whisper low instead,
'This sinner was a loving one—
And now her spinning is all done.'

VII.

And let the door ajar remain,
In case he should pass by anon;
And leave the wheel out very plain,
That HE, when passing in the sun,
May *see* the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

I.

FIVE months ago, the stream did flow,
  The lilies bloomed within the sedge;
And we were lingering to and fro,—
Where none will track thee in this snow,
  Along the stream, beside the hedge.
Ah, sweet, be free to love and go!
  For if I do not hear thy foot,
  The frozen river is as mute,—
  The flowers have dried down to the root:
  And why, since these be changed since May,
    Shouldst *thou* change less than *they?*

II.

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,
  The tears have drifted to mine eyes;
And my poor cheeks, five months ago,
Set blushing at thy praises so,
  Put paleness on for a disguise.

Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go!
For if my face is turned to pale,
It was thine oath that first did fail,—
It was thy love proved false and frail!
And why, since these be changed enow,
Should *I* change less than *thou?*

THAT DAY.

I.

I STAND by the river where both of us stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken the flood;
And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
One forlorn since that day.

II.

The flowers of the margin are many to see,
For none stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me;
The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,
For my low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
As thy vow did that day!

III.

I stand by the river—I think of the vow—
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker, be thou!
I leave the flower growing—the bird, unreproved;—
Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,
And my lover that day?

IV.

Go! be sure of my love—by that treason forgiven;
Of my prayers—by the blessings they win thee from Heaven;
Of my grief—(guess the length of the sword by the sheath's)
By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's!
Go,—be clear of that day!

A REED.

I.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed:
No flattering breath shall from me lead
  A silver sound, a hollow sound!
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that in re-echoing
  Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
  Left flat upon a dismal shore;
Yet if a little maid, or child,
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild,
  This reed will answer evermore.

III.

I am no trumpet, but a reed:
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
  Their nets along the river's edge,—
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands—if they should fall;
  Then let them leave me in the sedge.

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's 'Götter Griechenlands,' and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ('De Oraculorum Defectu'), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of 'Great Pan is dead!' swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude.

E. B. B.

I.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

II.

In what revels are ye sunken
In old Æthiopia?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora

Your divine pale lips that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

III.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,—
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

IV.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

V.

'Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,'
Said the old Hellenic tongue!
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung!
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay—
Since Pan is dead?

VI.

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenchèd locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?—
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye.
For Pan is dead.

VII.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree?—
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye.
For Pan is dead.

VIII.

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills,
Of the everlasting hills.
Pan, Pan is dead.

IX.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,—
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities—
Now Pan is dead!

X.

Jove! that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail,
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XI.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?
Pan, Pan is dead.

XII.

Ha, Apollo! Floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!
Pan, Pan is dead.

XIII.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the God-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?
Pan, Pan is dead.

XIV.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own vines!
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,—
'Evohe—ah—evohe—!'
Ah, Pan is dead.

XV.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone;
And old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun:
Ceres smileth stern thereat,—
'We *all* now are desolate—
Now Pan is dead.'

XVI.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart!
Ai Adonis! At that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—
Pan, Pan is dead.

XVII.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another,—huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly,—
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XVIII.

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay! Pan is dead.

XIX.

Crownèd Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head:
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed;
Scornful children are not mute,—
'Mother, mother, walk a-foot—
Since Pan is dead.'

XX.

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!
For Pan is dead.

XXI.

Gods! we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign!
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine!
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXII.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn—
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

XXIII.

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder!
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now, Pan is dead.

XXIV.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the pilèd Dark behind;
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail—
'Pan, Pan is dead.'

XXV.

And the rowers from the benches
Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place;
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
'Pan, Pan is dead.'

XXVI.

And that dismal cry rose slowly
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said—
PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

XXVII.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love's sake on a cross—
When His brow was chill with dying,
And His soul was faint with loss;
When His priestly blood dropped downward,
And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
Then, Pan was dead.

XXVIII.

By the love He stood alone in,
His sole Godhead rose complete;
And the false gods fell down moaning,
Each from off his golden seat—
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity—
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXIX.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine!
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine;
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only.
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXX.

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,
Her lost god's forsaking look!
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook—
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXXI.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore!
And I dash down this old chalice,
Whence libations ran of yore.
See! the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must!
Since Pan is dead.

XXXII.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track!
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades, call you back,—
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXIII.

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses,
Through your falsehood, at the True,—
We will weep *not* . . . ! earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

XXXIV.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth:
And those debonaire romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run.
Look up, poets, to the sun!
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXV.

Christ hath sent us down the angels;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for blessed mysteries;
And a Priest's hand, through creation,
Waveth calm and consecration—
And Pan is dead.

XXXVI.

Truth is fair: should we forego it?
Can we sigh right for a wrong?
God Himself is the best Poet,
And the real is His song.
Sing His truth out fair and full,
And secure His beautiful.
Let Pan be dead.

XXXVII.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame! to stand in His creation
And doubt Truth's sufficiency!—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—
When Pan is dead.

XXXVIII.

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure—
All of praise that hath admonisht,—
All of virtue, shall endure,—
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses—
Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX.

O brave poets, keep back nothing;
Nor mix falsehood with the whole!
Look up Godward! speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul!
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!
Pan, Pan is dead.

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A.A.E.C.

Born, July, 1848. Died, November, 1849.

I.

Of English blood, of Tuscan birth, . .
  What country should we give her?
Instead of any on the earth,
  The civic Heavens receive her.

II.

And here, among the English tombs,
  In Tuscan ground we lay her,
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
  Our English words of prayer.

III.

A little child!—how long she lived,
  By months, not years, is reckoned:
Born in one July, she survived
  Alone to see a second.

IV.

Bright-featured, as the July sun
  Her little face, still played in,
And splendours, with her birth begun,
  Had had no time for fading.

V.

So, LILY, from those July hours,
  No wonder we should call her;
She looked such kinship to the flowers . . .
  Was but a little taller.

VI.

A Tuscan Lily,—only white . . .
  As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
  The lilies of his Florence.

VII.

We could not wish her whiter, . . Her
  Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house!—a lovely thing to wear
  Upon a mother's bosom!

VIII.

This July creature thought perhaps
  Our speech not worth assuming:
She sate upon her parents' laps,
  And mimicked the gnat's humming;

IX.

. . Said 'Father,' 'Mother'!—then, left off;
For tongues celestial, fitter.
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch Heaven's jasper-glitter.

X.

Babes! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them:
'Let little children come to me,
And do not thou forbid them.'

XI.

So, unforbidding, have we met,
And gently here have laid her,
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'er-spread her.

XII.

We should bring pansies quick with spring,
Rose, violet, daffodilly,
And also, above everything,
White lilies for our Lily.

XIII.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts . .
Glad, grateful attestations
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,—
With calm renunciations.

XIV.

Her very mother with light feet
  Should leave the place too earthy,
Saying, 'The angels have thee, sweet,
  Because we are not worthy.'

XV.

But winter kills the orange buds,—
  The gardens in the frost are;
And all the heart dissolves in floods,
  Remembering we have lost her!

XVI.

Poor earth, poor heart!—too weak, too weak,
  To miss the July shining!
Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak,
  When God speaks of resigning!

XVII.

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
  Thou God, the self-existent!
We catch up wild at parting saints,
  And feel thy Heaven too distant!

XVIII.

The wind that swept them out of sin,
  Has ruffled all our vesture:
On the shut door that let them in,
  We beat with frantic gesture,—

XIX.

To us, us also—open straight!
  The outer life is chilly—
Are *we* too, like the earth, to wait
  Till next year for our Lily?

XX.

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
  My leaping, dimpled treasure,—
At every word I write like these,
  Clasped close, with stronger pressure!

XXI.

Too well my own heart understands . . .
  At every word beats fuller . .
My little feet, my little hands,
  And hair of Lily's colour!

XXII.

—But God gives patience, Love learns strength,
  And Faith remembers promise,
And Hope itself can smile at length
  On other hopes gone from us.

XXIII.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer Death,
  Through struggle, made more glorious:
This mother stills her sobbing breath,
  Renouncing, yet victorious.

XXIV.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,
With spirit unbereaven—
'God will not all take back His gifts:
My Lily's mine in Heaven!

XXV.

'Still mine! maternal rights serene
Not given to another!
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of child and mother.

XXVI.

'Meanwhile,' the mother cries, 'content!
Our love was well divided:
Its sweetness following where she went,
Its anguish stayed where I did.

XXVII.

'Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness!
To us, the empty room and cot,—
To her, the Heaven's completeness!

XXVIII.

'To us, this grave—to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in;
To us, the silence in the house,—
To her, the choral singing!

XXIX.

'For her, to gladden in God's view,—
For us, to hope and bear on!—
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the Rose of Sharon.

XXX.

'Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily clipped,
In love more calm than this is,—
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses!

XXXI.

'While none shall tell thee of our tears,
These human tears now falling,
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in!'

XXXII.

—Child, father, mother—who, left out?
Not mother, and not father!—
And when, their dying couch about,
The natural mists shall gather,

XXXIII.

Some smiling angel close shall stand
In old Correggio's fashion,
Bearing a LILY in his hand,
For death's ANNUNCIATION.

CATARINA TO CAMOENS;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

I.

On the door you will not enter,
  I have gazed too long—adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure—
  Death is near me,—and not *you!*
    Come, O lover,
    Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

II.

When I heard you sing that burden
  In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
  I but hearkened that of yours—
    Only saying
    In heart-playing,
'Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, his have seen!'

III.

But all changes. At this vesper,
  Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
  'Love, I love you,' as before,—
    Death pervading
    Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen?

IV.

Yes! I think, were you beside them,
  Near the bed I die upon,—
Though their beauty you denied them,
  As you stood there, looking down,
    You would truly
    Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

V.

And if *you* looked down upon them,
  And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has forgone them
  Would be gathered back anew!
    They would truly
    Be as duly
Love-transformed to Beauty's sheen,—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VI.

But, ah me! you only see me
  In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
  Through the wavings of my fan,—
    And unweeting
    Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VII.

While my spirit leans and reaches
  From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
  In your love to help my bale—
    O my poet,
    Come and show it!
Come, of latest love, to glean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VIII.

O my poet, O my prophet,
  When you praised their sweetness so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
  That it might be near to go?
    Had you fancies
    From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

IX.

No reply! The fountain's warble
  In the court-yard sounds alone.
As the water to the marble
  So my heart falls with a moan,
    From love-sighing
    To this dying!
Death forerunneth Love to win
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

X.

Will you come? When I'm departed
  Where all sweetnesses are hid—
When thy voice, my tender-hearted,
  Will not lift up either lid.
    Cry, O lover,
    Love is over!
Cry beneath the cypress green—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

XI.

When the angelus is ringing,
  Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
  Which brought angels down our talk?
    Spirit-shriven
    I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled—'Is earth unclean,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

XII.

When beneath the palace-lattice,
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there—that is
Not the old familiar one,—
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
'Here, ye watched me morn and e'en,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

XIII.

When the palace ladies sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
'Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,'—
Will you tremble,
Yet dissemble,—
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

XIV.

'Sweetest eyes!' How sweet in flowings,
The repeated cadence is!
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
'Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise intervene—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

XV.

But the priest waits for the praying,
  And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
  Strains more solemn high than these!
    Miserere
    For the weary—
Oh, no longer for Catrine,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

XVI.

Keep my riband; take and keep it,—
  I have loosed it from my hair;*
Feeling, while you overweep it,
  Not alone in your despair,—
    Since with saintly
    Watch, unfaintly,
Out of Heaven shall o'er you lean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen,'

XVII.

But—but *now*—yet unremoved
  Up to Heaven, they glisten fast:
You may cast away, Beloved,
  In your future, all my past!
    Such old phrases
    May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

* She left him the riband from her hair.

XVIII.

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
  Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
  Dropt for any hope of HIS!
    Death has boldness
    Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

XIX.

I will look out to his future—
  I will bless it till it shine.
Should he ever be a suitor
  Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
    Sunshine gild them,
    Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

I.

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years, . .
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery while I strove, . .
'Guess now who holds thee?'—'Death!' I said.
But, there,
The silver answer rang . . 'Not Death, but Love.'

II.

BUT only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said; Himself, beside
Thee speaking and me listening! and replied
One of us . . *that* was God! . . and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
The deathweights, placed there, would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. 'Nay' is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend:
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars,—
And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III.

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to ply thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer? . . singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV.

THOU hast thy calling to some palace floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems! where
The dancers will break footing from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush! call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . as thou must sing . . alone, aloof.

V.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my beloved, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand further off then! Go.

VI.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore, . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes, the tears of two.

VII.

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I who thought to sink
Was caught up into love and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . this lute and song . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear,
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII.

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, . . who has brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so. Not cold!—but very poor instead!
Ask God who knows! for frequent tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! Let it serve to trample on.

IX.

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own and grieve
That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love . . . which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

"Yet all love is sweet is long
Given or returned. Common as light
and its familiar voice wearies not ever
Like the wide heaven the all sustaining
It makes the replica qual to the God
Shelley.

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax! An equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed.
And love is fire: and when I say at need
I love thee . . mark! . . *I love thee!* . . in thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
With conscience of the new rays that proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI.

And therefore if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the woodland nightingale
A melancholy music! . . why advert
To these things? O Beloved, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place:
And yet because I love thee I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love and yet in vain, . .
To bless thee yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII.

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost, . .
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own.
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
And that I love (O soul, I must be meek!)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII.

And wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself . . me . . that I should bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV.

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
'I love her for her smile . . her look . . her way
Of speaking gently, . . for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—
For these things in themselves, Beloved may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
Since one might well forget to weep who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on through love's eternity.

XV.

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
On me thou lookest, with no doubting care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—
For sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
Were most impossible failure if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee . . on thee . .
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory . . .
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI.

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart, henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward as in crushing low:
And, as a soldier struck down by a sword
May cry, 'My strife ends here,' and sink to earth,
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,
Here ends my doubt! If *thou* invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII.

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds, a melody that floats
In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine!
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? . . or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse? . .
A shade, in which to sing . . . of palm or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from singing? . . Choose.

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown length and say
'Take it.' My day of youth went yesterday;
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more. It only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks, the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
Would take this first, but Love is justified;
Take it thou, . . finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX.

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
I barter curl for curl upon that mart;
And from my poet's forehead to my heart,
Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
As purply black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart, . .
Thy bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,
Here on my heart as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX.

BELOVED, my Beloved, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sate alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice, . . but link by link
Went counting all my chains as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand . . . . why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder. Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI.

Say over again and yet once over again
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as thou dost treat it,
Remember never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain,
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed!
Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry . . speak once more . . thou lovest! Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll—
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence, with thy soul.

XXII.

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvéd point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us, and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Beloved,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Would'st thou miss any life in losing mine,
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine,
Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
I marvelled, my Beloved, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . *so* much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range!
Then, love me, Love! look on me . . breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV.

LET the world's sharpness like a clasping knife
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm,
And let us hear no sound of human strife
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm,
Against the stab of worldlings who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots! accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer;
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV.

A HEAVY heart, Beloved, have I borne
From year to year until I saw thy face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the place
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
As the stringed pearls . . each lifted in its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
Were changed to long despairs, . . till God's own grace
Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
And let it drop adown thy calmly great
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
Which its own nature doth precipitate,
While thine doth close above it, mediating
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI.

I LIVED with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust,—their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come . . to *be*,
Beloved, what they *seemed*. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendours . . (better, yet the same, . .
As river-water hallowed into fonts . .)
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII.

My own beloved, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
And in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was gone,
And I who looked for only God, found *thee!*
I find thee: I am safe, and strong, and glad.
As one who stands in dewless asphodel
Looks backward on the tedious time he had
In the upper life . . so I, with bosom-swell,
Make witness, here between the good and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVII.

My letters! all dead paper, . . mute and white!—
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said, . . he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this, . . the paper's light . .
Said, *Dear, I love thee;* and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past:
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast:
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed,
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX.

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines about a tree
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather instantly
Renew thy presence! As a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee,
Drop heavily down, . . burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX.

I SEE thine image through my tears to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Beloved, is it thou
Or I? Who makes me sad? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite,
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou'rt out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's amen!
Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal
For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
As now these tears come . . . falling hot and real?

XXXI.

Thou comest! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion . . . that we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose!
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII.

THE first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love!—more like an out of tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII.

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
So glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices, which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God . . call God!—So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate:
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late!
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer, and not wait.

XXXIV.

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
Lo, the vain promise! Is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought,—break from solitude;—
Yet still my heart goes to thee . . . ponder how . .
Not as to a single good but all my good!
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV.

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And *be* all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors . . another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest! If to conquer love has tried,
To conquer grief tries more . . . as all things prove;
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love—
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI.

When we met first and loved, I did not build
Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
To last, a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God has willed
A still renewable fear . . O love, O troth . .
Lest these enclasped hands should never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
And Love be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII.

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should make
Of all that strong divineness which I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovranty, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness, and distort
Thy worthiest love with worthless counterfeit.
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort,
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII.

First time he kissed me, he but only kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write,
And ever since it grew more clean and white, . .
Slow to world-greetings . . quick with its 'Oh, list,'
When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
I could not wear here plainer to my sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!
That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
The third upon my lips was folded down
In perfect, purple state! since when, indeed,
I have been proud and said, 'My love, my own.'

XXXIX.

Because thou hast the power and own'st the grace
To look through and behind this mask of me,
(Against which, years have beat thus blanchingly
With their rains!) and to behold my soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's race,—
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for a place
In the new Heavens,—because nor sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to go, . .
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed, . .
Nothing repels thee, . . Dearest, teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good!

XL.

Oh, yes! they love through all this world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth.
I have heard love talked in my early youth,
And since, not so long back but that the flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
Slips on the nut, if after frequent showers
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so much
Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry 'Too late.'

XLI.

I THANK all who have loved me in their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-wall,
To hear my music in its louder parts,
Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who in my voice's sink and fall,
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot,
To harken what I said between my tears, . .
Instruct me how to thank thee!—Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future years,
That *they* should lend it utterance and salute
Love that endures, with Life that disappears!

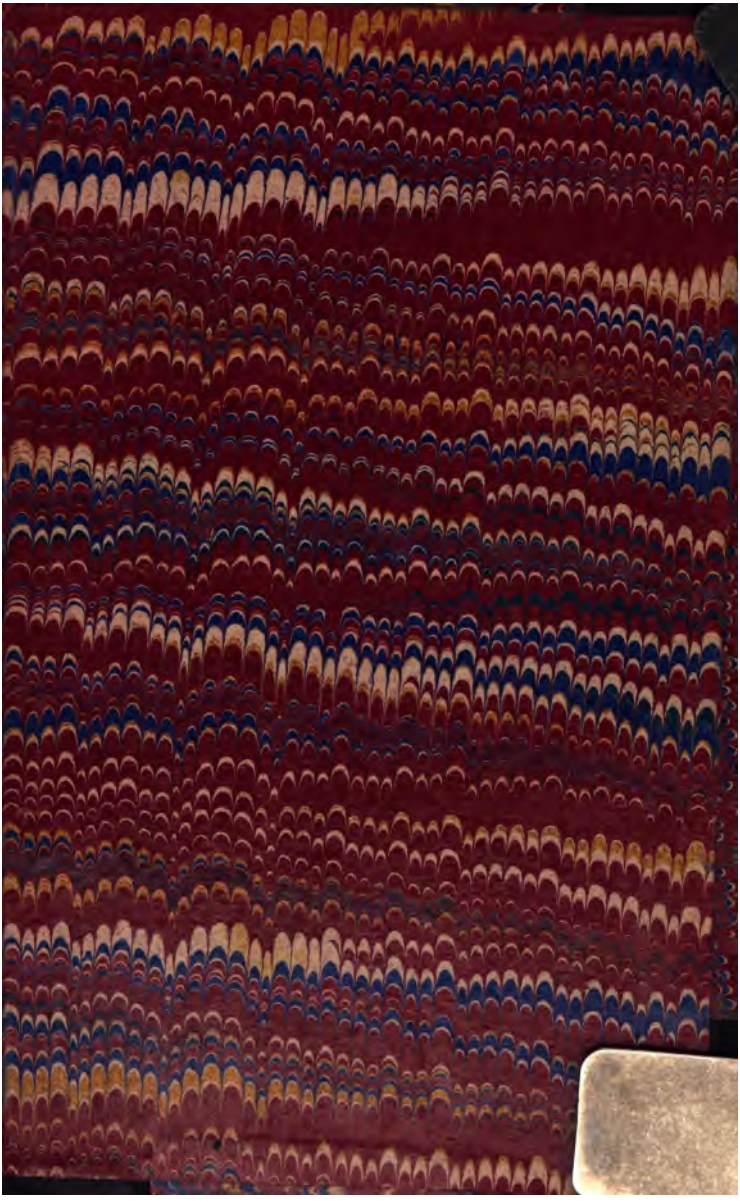
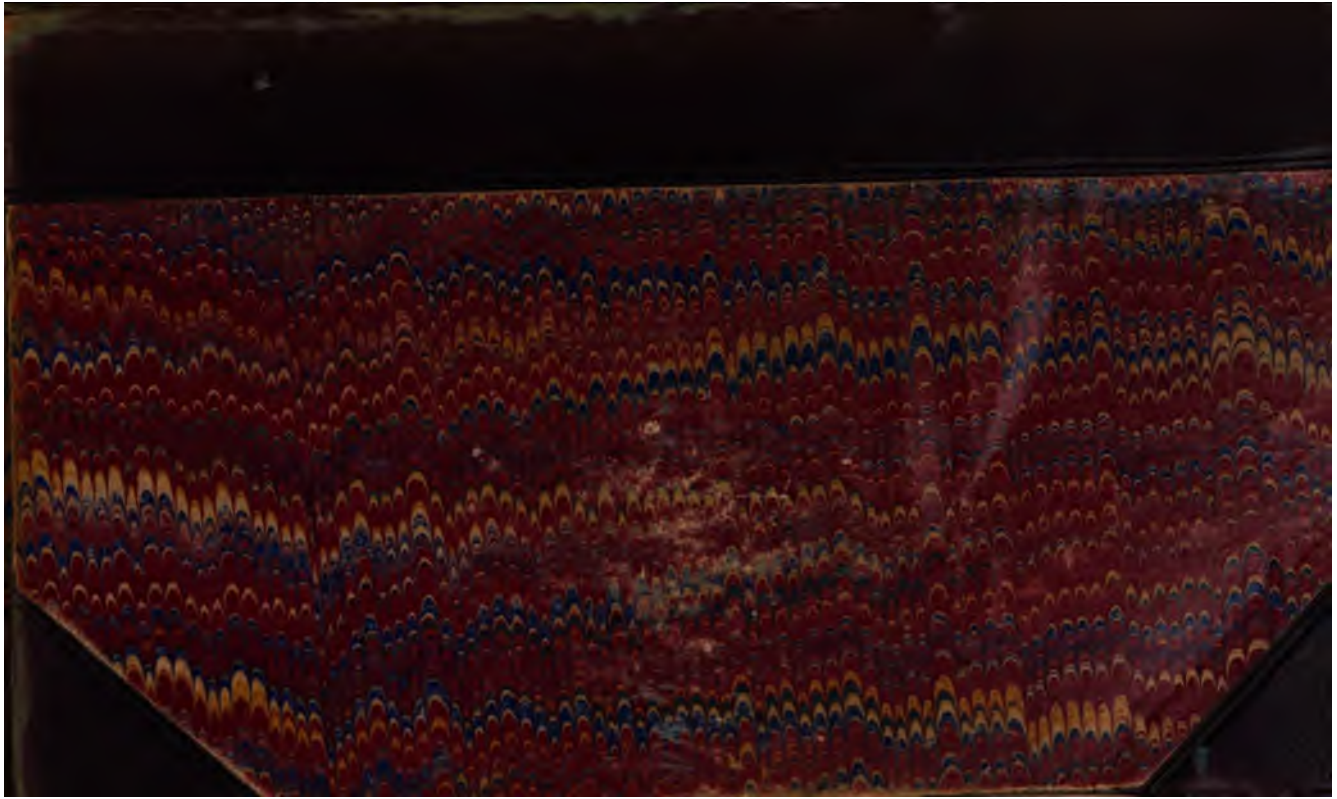
XLII.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and Ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise;
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith;
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

XLIII.

BELOVED, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!— ake them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine;
Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are left in mine.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
ND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.